BLOOD BUZZ

Western Cape Blood Service
Do something remarkable

Quarterly Newsletter - August 2020

Dear Blood Donor,

In the last edition, we wrote about some of the changes we put in place to adapt to the new 'normal'. We featured an article which focused on the safety protocols in place to assure all blood donors that it is safe to donate blood during the COVID-19 pandemic. The safety of all donors and staff remains our top priority. You can read more about what some donors had to say about their blood donation experience during COVID-19, in the donor profiles section.

Recently the government announced that the wearing of face masks in public is compulsory for everyone at all times. We took this opportunity to raise further awareness by releasing a limited-edition blood donor face mask in August, get a glimpse of the face mask in this edition. We are collaborating with SANBS in a trial to establish if convalescent plasma from recovered COVID-19 patients could help save COVID-19 patients' lives. Read more about this in Dr Caroline Hilton's article 'Fighting COVID-19'.

In this edition of Blood Buzz, you'll also read more about our Facebook partnership, our Smile FM Mandela challenge, what Blood Buddy got up to for Youth Day, and you will find great tips on how to maintain your iron levels. As usual we wrap up things with a great recipe for a yummy blueberry seed smoothie to boost your iron levels, the natural way.

Enjoy and please stay safe.

Yours in blood donation,
Marike Gevers

Maintaining Haemoglobin (Iron) Levels the Natural Way

by Craig Hicks

We often speak about the many important reasons to donate blood, but there are times when people aren't able to even if they wanted to. Unfortunately, having a low haemoglobin (iron) level is one of the most common reasons for being deferred from donating. In order to donate, females should have a haemoglobin level of 12.5g/d and males 13.5 g/d. But look on the bright side, there are ways to boost and maintain a healthy haemoglobin level.

While iron supplements are an option, the best way to increase your iron levels is through your diet. There are two aspects to this – the first is to increase the intake of iron-rich foods and the second is to increase your intake of vitamin C which is essential for promoting the absorption of iron in your body.

Let's take a look at some of the best iron-rich foods.

Iron-rich animal foods:

Organ meat – Foods such as liver and kidneys are both high in iron as well as vitamin C and are a great option for boosting your haemoglobin levels.

Regular meat – While the darker meats such as beef have higher iron content than the lighter meats such as chicken and pork, you can still get a decent supply of iron from all of them.

Iron-rich plant-based foods:

Legumes like lentils, soybeans and kidney beans are great sources of iron as are the dark green leafy vegetables like spinach, kale, and swiss chard.

Another way to boost your iron levels is by eating fortified and iron-enriched breakfast cereals. Remember to check the labels to confirm the iron content. Other plant-based sources included fortified whole-grain bread, couscous and quinoa.

We wouldn't want anything to get in the way of the remarkable act of donating blood so remember to keep your haemoglobin levels up so that you can continue saving lives!

Smile 90.4 FM Blood Drive during Mandela month – drove people to donate and patients to smile

by Marike Gevers

The month of July or better known as Mandela month, challenges us to drive change, take action and to transform the world, that's why we partnered with Smile 90.4 FM for a blood drive.

Together we motivated donors to brave the cold and take 30 of their 67 minutes to donate blood at any of our three fixed donation sites namely Blue Route Mall, N1 City or 9 Long Street. This campaign ran from Monday, 13 July until Saturday, 18 July. Our target was to collect 670 units of blood and recruit 67 new donors. We managed to collect 639 units of blood, which in turn could help save up to 1,917 lives. And 56 new donors started their blood donation journey that day. This year we also managed to collect 84 more units than last year in the same time period.

We want to thank every donor that showed their support this Mandela month and made a patient smile.

From our blood donors

by Gloria Kula

Ina Meiring

Number of donations: 43

Why do you donate blood?
"I donate blood because I know I can save lives."

In terms of COVID-19, how safe do you feel at our blood donation clinics?
"I can see that a lot is being done to ensure our safety; there are sanitisers everywhere, and tables are sanitised after every person leaves."

A message for potential donors:
"Well, you don't have to be a doctor to save lives, just donate blood."

Sean Fox

Number of donations: 2

Why do you donate blood?
"I thought it would be the right thing to do."

In terms of COVID-19, how safe do you feel at our blood donation clinics?
"I find it very safe."

A message for potential donors:
"You have it in you to do what's right."

Johann Muller

Number of donations: 2

Why do you donate blood?
"Our company usually has a blood donation clinic. My colleagues encouraged me to donate for the first time, and now I'm hooked."

In terms of COVID-19, how safe do you feel at our blood donation clinics?
"The whole experience has been seamless, we can see that there are strict measures in place."

A message for potential donors:
"You are definitely saving someone's life and the needle is not sore at all."

Daniel Muller

Number of donations: 136

Why do you donate blood?
"I want to help people in need and blood donation is one way of doing that."

In terms of COVID-19, how safe do you feel at our blood donation clinics?
"I didn't expect anything less than what was done."

A message for potential donors:
"You have nothing to lose and everything to gain, knowing you saved a life."

Elizabeth Kleinhans

Number of donations: 1

Why do you donate blood?
"My sister motivated me to donate blood."

In terms of COVID-19, how safe do you feel at our blood donation clinics?
"I wish all the shops would do what you are doing; sanitising everything after it has been used."

A message for potential donors:
"Don't be scared it's not painful at all."

Chris Marais

Number of donations: 38

Why do you donate blood?
"This is my way of giving back to those in need."

In terms of COVID-19, how safe do you feel at our blood donation clinics?
"Very safe, I saw one of your staff member's sanitising the bed after a donor left."

A message for potential donors:
"Please donate blood, you are giving someone a second chance at life."

Donate blood and receive a limited-edition face mask

Keep an eye out for our limited-editon face mask this August. We will soon launch this reversable face mask to anyone who successfully donates blood, while stocks last.

Fighting COVID-19

by Dr Caroline Hilton

The South African National Blood Service and Western Cape Blood Service are participating in a clinical trial to establish whether the plasma of people who have recovered from COVID-19 infection can be used as a treatment option for people with the disease - this is called ‘convalescent plasma’.

Plasma is the liquid part of the blood that contains solutes, important proteins and antibodies. It is specifically the antibodies that researchers are interested in for this trial, as these may provide additional help if transfused to a patient. The immune system creates antibodies to fight disease in our bodies. Antibodies are specialised proteins that are designed to recognise a specific pathogen (in this case, the SARS-Coronavirus-2), attach to it, and assist the immune system in destroying it in a variety of ways. While the patient would create their own antibodies, we are interested to see whether the transfusion of additional antibodies from a donor who previously had COVID-19 would assist in their recovery. There have been numerous studies throughout the world looking at the use of convalescent plasma as a treatment option, with mixed results.

This clinical trial is taking place at several hospitals throughout the country and is planned to start in early August. As the effectiveness of this type of treatment for COVID-19 has not been proven, and there are risks involved, it is not possible for members of the public to request convalescent plasma for their friends or family members with the disease. If this type of treatment is proven to be helpful, it will be offered on a far wider scale.

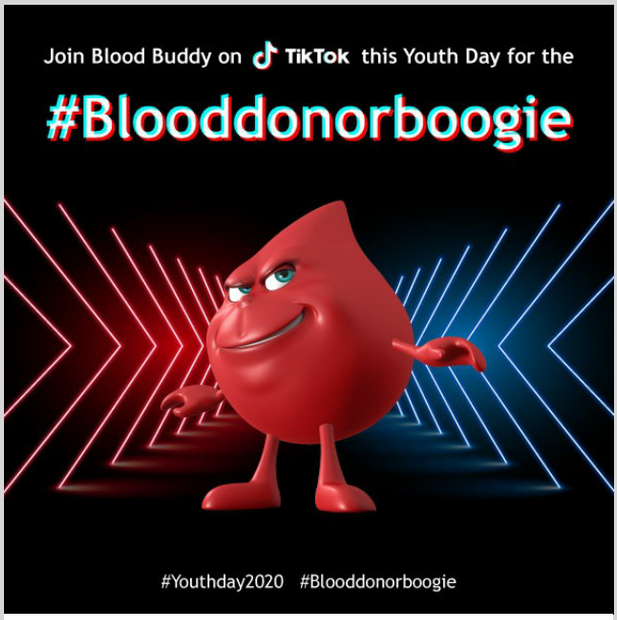
If you have recovered from COVID-19 and interested in being a plasma donor, please register on the Convalescent Plasma Registry on www.sanbs.org.za. Plasma donation is different from normal blood donation in that you are connected to an apheresis machine for about 30 to 40 minutes. Donations are currently taking place at our Head Offices in Pinelands only.

WCBS Staff Spreading the Mandela Day Spirit

by Alanna Kondo

As the country battles the Coronavirus global pandemic, our staff decided to focus on matters closer to home and gave towards an epidemic in the country of gender-based violence against women and children by supporting the Saartjie Baartman Centre of Hope. The generous donations made by staff we accepted by the director Bernadine Bachar, who thanked WCBS for helping vulnerable women and children, especially in these challenging times.

The staff really encompassed the vision of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who said, “Give what you have. To someone, it may be better than you dare to think.”

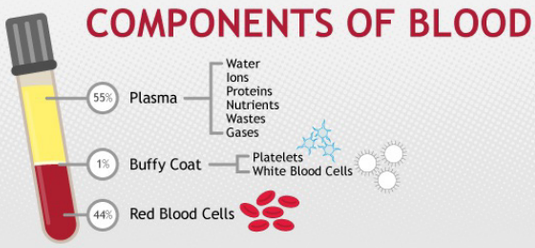


Blood Buddy Takes Youth Day Celebration to TikTok!

by Alanna Kondo

During blood donor month celebrated in June, our mascot Blood Buddy took Youth Day celebrations to the next level in an effort to support all our youth donors by launching a TikTok campaign called #blooddonorboogie. Blood Buddy showed off some cool moves and challenged all youth donors to record a short video of their dance moves to the cha-cha slide tune and upload the video on TikTok then tag @bloodbuddy and #blooddonorboogie. It was no surprise that talented dance moves were displayed, but it was @bloodbuddy who won the hearts of donors at a time when Youth Day celebrations had to go virtual.

This campaign adds to the growing list of the creative and innovative ways the Service is adapting to the new normal and ensuring that we continue to appeal to blood donors to donate blood, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Follow @bloodbuddy on TikTok, post your moves and tag @bloodbuddy and #blooddonorboogie or just enjoy the moves on our YouTube channel.



The Stuff You're Made of: Understanding the Different Blood Components

by Melanie Rossouw and Shaldine Sutton

Ever wondered what is happening inside the blood in your body?

Blood plays a vital role in the body by transporting oxygen and nutrients and removing waste from body cells. Blood in its entirety (called whole blood) consists of four key components - red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and plasma. Read on to find out more about what your blood is made of and used for.

What's in my blood?

Red blood cells are disk-shaped with a flatter, concave centre, which increases the surface area and contains haemoglobin but no nucleus or DNA. This biconcave shape allows the cells to flow smoothly through the narrowest blood vessels.

The buffy coat is an intermediate layer consisting of platelets and white blood cells. Platelets - the smallest blood cells - are formed when large megakaryocytes separate. White blood cells are larger than red cells and contain a nucleus and DNA. All white blood cells are produced and derived from multipotent cells in the bone marrow known as hematopoietic stem cells.

Plasma is a straw-coloured liquid portion of the blood consisting primarily of water and approximately 200 different proteins, such as salts, enzymes and antibodies.

What does it do?

Red blood cells contain haemoglobin consisting of 4 protein chains, each containing an iron atom. The iron binds to the oxygen inhaled by the lungs and is transported to organs in the body. The oxygen is replaced by carbon dioxide in the organs and transported back to the lungs to be exhaled.

Platelets fulfil a role in coagulation. If a blood vessel is damaged, platelets attach themselves forming a plug, resulting in a clot. White blood cells are the cells of the immune system that are involved in protecting the body against both infectious disease and foreign invaders. At the same time, plasma transports minerals, carbohydrates, vitamins, fats and proteins throughout the body. Different plasma proteins vary in function, that is clotting, immunity, carrier and fluid control functions.

How is it separated?

After donation, the whole blood, together with the satellite bags, is centrifuged (spun) at high speed. Centrifugation is the first form of separation. The blood separates due to the specific gravity of the different components. Red cells are the heaviest and collect at the bottom. Above the red cells is the buffy coat of platelets and white blood cells. The plasma is at the top.

Following centrifugation, the layered blood is placed in a component extractor, whereby a press pushes the plasma upwards and the red cells downwards out of the main bag into separate satellite bags. The red cells run into a storage fluid containing nutrients which keep the cells in an optimal condition. The buffy coat remains in the collection bag.

What is it used for?

Red cells maintain oxygen supply to the tissues when the patient's red cells are lost as a result of bleeding or anaemia. Platelets correct bleeding disorders caused by decreased or dysfunctional platelets. White blood cells work to destroy any foreign virus, fungus, or bacteria that enter your body. Plasma maintains blood volume after bleeding as a result of trauma or surgery, replaces clotting factors and corrects abnormal bleeding.

Whole blood, an entire unit, is only given to a patient when severe bleeding occurs and blood volume needs to be restored. Otherwise, only the component that is required is given to the patient. So now you know why 1 donation can save 3 lives.

Facebook Partnership Help Increases Blood Donations in South Africa

by Marike Gevers

Facebook partnered with us and the South African National Blood Service (SANBS) on 19 May 2020 in an attempt to encourage more South Africans to donate blood. Since 2017 the tech giant has motivated more than 60 million people in the US, Brazil, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan to become blood donors. Nunu Ntshingila, Regional Director of Facebook Africa said that the company would remain committed to “building safe and supportive communities on Facebook during these difficult times”. Ntshingila added, “We want to make it easy to connect people that want to donate with opportunities to give, while learning about the blood donation opportunities near them and inspiring action. This is an important partnership with SANBS and the Western Cape Blood Service”.

Using this feature is effortless and easy to navigate. South Africans between the ages of 18 and 65 can sign up to become a blood donor by going to the Blood Donations tab in the About section of your personal Facebook profile. Alternatively, you can go directly to facebook.com/donateblood. People will be able to see requests and opportunities to donate at our three fixed donation sites situated at N1 City, Blue Route Mall, 9 Long Street and our regional branches in George and Worcester.

Within the first month, over 45,000 reminders were set, and 4,736 people enquired about coming to donate. Currently, we have over 5,000 people that set reminders to donate blood every week. We are grateful for this new partnership with Facebook, and we are excited where technology will take us next and make blood donation accessible for more people.

Algoa FM Bloodline Week Saves Lives

by Arlecia November

Our George branch joined forces with SANBS in the annual Algoa FM Bloodline bleed to prevent the anticipated national winter blood shortage. This year Bloodline day was changed to Bloodline week due to COVID-19 restrictions. Bloodline week, encourages Algoa FM listeners to donate blood.

A target of 1,000 units was set for the week, and the big bleed started on Monday 6 July and ended Friday 10 July. Together we collected 1,052 units of blood which potentially could save up to 3,156 lives together.

Mrs Nieman, one of our regular donors, showed her support and reached a remarkable milestone of 125 donations.

Thank you SANBS and Algoa FM, we truly value this partnership. Together we save lives.

Iron-rich Recipe: Blueberry Seed Smoothie

by Irma Gevers

Prep: 10 – 15 minutes
Serves: 1 person

Ingredients
1 cup frozen blueberries
1 ripe medium-sized banana
1/2 cup full cream plain (probiotic) yoghurt
1 tablespoon broken flax seeds
1 tablespoon chia seeds

Instructions
Mix the seeds with a dollop of yoghurt in a bowl. Allow the mixture to sit for 10 - 15 minutes until it has thickened. Combine all the ingredients and blend until smooth. Serve in a glass and enjoy.

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SMS "Blood" to 33507 and we'll call you back (R1.50 per SMS)

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