

Hospital Notification Bulletin

March 11, 2020

Dear Hospital Partners,

As concern regarding COVID-19 continues to increase, LifeSouth is working to ensure a safe and ready blood supply to our hospital partners.

We are taking all reasonable preventative precautions to ensure the safety of our employees and blood donors, as well as your employees and patients. The biggest risk blood centers face is a blood shortage due to a decline in donations. We are communicating directly to our donors, our blood drive organizers and the public about the importance blood donation.

In the event of a mass outbreak here in the United States, and, specifically in our service area, blood conservation will be of the highest necessity to keep patients safe. Enclosed you will find an outline of our activities to ensure a stable supply.

- According to the FDA, there have been no reported or suspected cases of transfusion-transmitted COVID-19, and no cases of transfusion-transmitted cases from the other two coronaviruses that emerged during the past two decades (SARS and MERS-CoV).
- Individuals are not at risk of contracting COVID-19 from donating blood or by blood transfusion.
- AABB, FDA, CDC are not recommending any additional action by blood collection centers at this time because there is no data or precedent suggesting risk of transfusion transmission for COVID-19.
- LifeSouth is adhering to protocols implemented by hospitals to minimize risks to hospital patients and personnel, including delivery procedures and monitoring our team for potential signs and symptoms.
- Routine blood donor screening measures are in place to prevent individuals with clinical respiratory infections from donating blood.
- We have implemented a self-deferral of 28 days for donors who have traveled to areas with widespread community transmission, have been diagnosed with or suspected to have COVID-19, or lived with another person diagnosed with or suspected to have COVID-19.
- We have escalated recruitment efforts to combat a decline in donations by educating our blood donor base about the importance of donating now, so there is a ready supply should the spread of the virus significantly impact individuals' ability to donate. This includes recruitment of special antigen donors and maintaining an adequate supply for patients.

- Hospital support is needed to endorse the need for blood donations through internal and external communications by directing donors to www.lifesouth.org to find a blood drive or make an appointment. Also, hospitals are asked to host blood drives now.
- We have begun to see the beginning signs of blood shortages and are requesting that hospitals plan for potential shortages, update their disaster plans, and evaluate transfusion protocols in the event of an emergency. Blood conservation measures may include:
 - Evaluating transfusion triggers
 - Allocation of blood based on triaged needs
 - Postponing elective surgeries
 - Reviewing the AABB Recommendations on the Use of Group O Red Blood Cells, [AABB's Association Bulletin 19-02](#)
- LifeSouth is working to increase inventory in the event of a regionalized shortage and will work with blood centers across the United States to help ensure blood is available.
- LifeSouth offers MD support regarding transfusion consultation or ideas on conservation. Our V.P. of Medical Services, Chris Lough, M.D., may be reached at 352-224-1644 or cmlough@lifesouth.org.

We will continue to monitor the virus and the effect it may have on our operations and keep you informed of any changes or updates.

With coordinated efforts, we ensure the community blood supply remains stable, and please know we are doing everything possible to make sure blood is available and ready for patient care.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local LifeSouth team or contact me directly at 352-224-1705 or jdpettyjohn@lifesouth.org.

Thank you,

JD Pettyjohn
V. P. of Operations
LifeSouth Community Blood Centers