



FOR PROFESSIONALS
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WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY HIGHLIGHTS OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE LIVES

12 June 2014: Latest statistics released by the World Health Organisation reveal that almost 800 women worldwide die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth every day, with more than half of these taking place in sub-Saharan Africa. This year's World Blood Donor Day, 14th June 2014, highlights the importance of timely access to safe blood in order to reduce the number of maternal deaths.

According to Dr Dominique Stott, Executive: Medical Standards and Services at PPS, expecting mothers face a number of risks and complications during childbirth, which may even lead to death. "The major complication that accounts for most maternal deaths worldwide is severe bleeding, which mostly happens after the child is born. A healthy woman can die if she is left unattended when suffering from severe bleeding after birth."

In an effort to help reduce the number of preventable maternal mortalities, as a result of childbirth, all eligible South Africans are encouraged to donate blood on World Blood Donor Day.

Dr Stott points out that donating blood is a safe procedure. "One cannot get any blood transmissible diseases from donating blood because all needles and fingerprick lancets are new, sterile and used only once. After use, each lancet and needle is placed in a special medical-waste container and incinerated. Trained staff collect all blood donations and very strict protocols are followed to ensure that all blood donation procedures are safe and hygienic."

To become a safe blood donor persons must:

- Weigh at least 50kg
- Be between the ages of 16 and 65
- Be in good health
- Lead a sexually safe lifestyle
- Consider your blood safe for transfusion to a patient

If you have had sexual contact with a new partner or more than one partner in the last six months, or there is a chance you have contracted a STD, then it is not considered safe for you to donate blood. However, if you are in a stable, monogamous relationship, regardless of your sexuality, your donation is welcome.

Dr Stott adds that the need for blood never stops, so it is important that we use initiatives such as World Blood Donor Day to highlight the importance of people making regular donations in order to save lives. "Donating blood is especially important if someone has blood type O negative which means they are 'universal donors' and their blood can be used for all types of medical emergencies without testing."

“A donor can donate blood every 56 days, but because blood lasts only 42 days after donation, regular donors are essential for sustainability. There are far fewer donors than recipients, so blood is always in short supply. Therefore, it is vital not to view a donation as a once-off exercise,” she says.

There are various locations throughout South Africa for people to donate blood, as well as mobile blood donation drives. All dates, locations and further information can be found on the SANBS website at www.sanbs.org.za.