



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
SINGAPORE, 20 MAY 2003**

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY  
PRESS RELEASE**

## **HSA UPDATES ON SARS PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD THE NATIONAL BLOOD SUPPLY**

The Health Sciences Authority [HSA] has, with effect from 19 May 03, required that all blood donors are asked for a history of risk exposure to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome [SARS] in the last **3** weeks, instead of 2 weeks previously. This marginal increase in the SARS-screening procedure of blood donors aligns with the new recommendations on SARS and blood safety issued by the World Health Organisation [WHO] on 15 May 03 and is based on current information on SARS.

2 At this time, there are no known cases of SARS transmission via blood products. The Bloodbank@HSA, run by the Centre for Transfusion Medicine of HSA, would like to emphasize that these criteria are precautionary measures taken to address the theoretical risk of SARS virus through blood transfusion and to preserve the safety of the national blood supply. As new information becomes available, the Bloodbank@HSA will continue to review and update these guidelines to ensure that our blood donors and patients in the hospitals are provided with the highest standards of blood safety practice and care.

### **BLOOD DONORS ARE ASKED FOR A 3-WEEK RISK HISTORY OF SARS EXPOSURE**

3 Only donors who are in good health at the time of donation are accepted for blood donations. Long-standing standard blood safety procedures serve as a safeguard against donation by potential donors who are unwell, including those with symptoms of flu and pneumonia.

4 Since 18 March 03, the Bloodbank@HSA, has tightened the already stringent screening of blood donors to safeguard our national blood supply from SARS and to minimise donors' risk to SARS exposure.

5 Currently, there is no known reliable method to test asymptomatic persons for SARS. Hence, to prevent any risk of SARS being transmitted through blood transfusions, blood donors are asked about any travel history to SARS-affected countries, recent hospital visits and close contact with SARS patients in the last 3 weeks prior the date of donation. If there is a possibility of exposure to SARS, potential donors will be deferred from donating blood for 3 weeks from the last date of travel, visit to hospital or contact.

## **POTENTIAL BLOOD DONORS WHO HAVE SARS DEFERRED FOR 3 MONTHS**

6 Potential donors who have been diagnosed as probable SARS cases will be deferred from donating blood for a period of 3 months from the date of full recovery and cessation of therapy, instead of the 6-month deferral period first used by the Bloodbank@HSA. The revision to the deferral period of probable SARS-infected donors aligns with the recently issued WHO guidelines and is based on new information on the SARS virus.

## **SARS-SCREENING APPLIES TO ALL BLOOD DONATION SESSIONS**

7 Whether donating at the Bloodbank@HSA located at HSA HQ in Outram Road or at mobile blood-donation sessions organised by our National Blood Donor Recruiter, the Singapore Red Cross Society (SRCS), all blood donors are asked these additional SARS-related screening questions, over and above some other health screening questions.

8 These additional steps are precautionary measures taken to further safeguard Singapore's blood supply. At the Bloodbank@HSA, the screening criteria are reviewed on an ongoing basis, as new information becomes available, to ensure that donors are not unnecessarily deterred from donating blood.

9 For details on the latest screening procedures, donors are welcome to call the Bloodbank@HSA at Tel: 6213-0626 or the SRCS at Tel: 6220-0183. Alternatively, they can visit HSA's website at [www.hsa.gov.sg](http://www.hsa.gov.sg) for the latest updates on screening criteria.

[Click here for the PDF copy of the message to blood donors on the additional precautionary measures taken for SARS](#)

## **ALL ELIGIBLE BLOOD DONORS URGED TO GIVE BLOOD REGULARLY**

10 As always, HSA strongly encourages all eligible blood donors to continue their regular donations despite the current SARS situation. Blood is life-saving and it is still needed daily at our hospitals for bleeding emergencies, emergency surgeries and blood diseases. With the tightened screening of blood donors, all donors can be assured that it is safe to donate blood.

11 Blood donations can be made at:  
**Bloodbank@HSA**  
Health Sciences Authority, 11 Outram Road, Singapore 169078

### **Opening Hours**

Mon to Thurs - 9am to 6pm; Fri - 9am to 8pm; Sat & Sun - 9am to 2pm

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY**  
**20 MAY 03**

### **Notes to the Editor**

All SARS-screenings, conducted prior to blood donations, now ask for a 3 weeks' history of risk exposure to SARS instead of 2 weeks' risk history previously. Kindly note that letters were sent recently to our blood donors to encourage them to donate blood as well as to inform them of the criteria in SARS-screening for blood donation. *These letters, however, did not reflect the new information of the 3-week SARS-risk history period.* As this new 3-week SARS-risk history period was only introduced on Monday, 19 May 03, we would be grateful for your editorial support to publicize and inform all blood donors in our population on this recent revision.

### **About the Health Sciences Authority**

At the Health Sciences Authority [HSA], we apply medical, pharmaceutical and specialised scientific expertise to safeguard public health and safety in Singapore. As one multidisciplinary agency, we serve as the national regulator of all therapeutic products by providing a seamless yet rigorous regulatory process to the healthcare and biomedical sciences industries. We also run the national blood bank, Bloodbank@HSA, protecting the integrity of the nation's blood supply. As the national reference agency, we exploit specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in order to serve the administration of justice and enhance safety in our community. For more details, visit: **[www.hsa.gov.sg](http://www.hsa.gov.sg)**