



**American
Red Cross**

Empower GROUP O CARE

Stewardship Tip: **Start Smart**

Quick Fact

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**Demand for O negative RBCs
has risen from 9.7% in 2013
to over 13% in 2025!**

TIP

**Develop protocols for
emergency transfusions
in patients with unknown
blood types.**

**Contact your Red Cross Medical
Director to Learn More.**

Does your blood bank have a policy defining when to use O positive RBCs during emergency transfusions in patients with unknown blood types?

- O negative RBCs should be saved for O negative patients and in emergencies for women of childbearing potential when blood type is unknown.^{1,2}
- During emergencies, adult males and women beyond childbearing potential should be transfused with O positive RBCs and switched to type-specific as soon as possible.^{1,2}
- O positive RBCs should be given to Rh negative patients with significant bleeding when O negative RBCs are not available or are in short supply.^{2,3}
- Transfuse type-specific units whenever possible.²

AABB Recommendations for Appropriate Group O Use⁴:

According to the AABB: Don't transfuse O negative blood except to O negative patients and in emergencies for women of childbearing potential with unknown blood group. O negative blood units are in chronic short supply due in part to overutilization for patients who are not O negative.

1. <https://www.aabb.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/resources/choosing-wisely-five-things-physicians-and-patients-should-question.pdf>
2. <https://www.aabb.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/resources/association-bulletins/ab19-02-revised.pdf>
3. Dunbar NM, Yazer MH, for the BEST Collaborative. O- product transfusion, inventory management, and utilization during shortage: The OPTIMUS study. *Transfusion* 2018;58: 1348-55.
3. <https://www.aabb.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/resources/choosing-wisely-five-things-physicians-and-patients-should-question.pdf>