

ISBT128 2D DataMatrix Barcode Implementation – FAQs for Laboratories and Hospitals

Q: When will the fresh blood product component labels change?

The barcode symbology for all fresh blood products funded under the national blood arrangements will be transitioning to ISBT128 2D DataMatrix. The introduction of an ISBT128 2D DataMatrix will occur as planned on **30 November 2025**. The removal of the Codabar Transition label, initially planned for 30 November 2025, **will be delayed until 31 March 2029**. The removal has been delayed until **31 March 2029** to allow NSW Health Pathology time to upgrade laboratory information systems.

NSW Health Pathology is the largest pathology provider nationally and services many patients daily. The removal of the Codabar transition label would result in substantial manual data entry. This could in turn increase the significant risk of patient harm associated with identification errors.

Q: What are the changes to the component label?

- The Codabar barcode (bottom section) will be removed from all fresh blood product component labels on **31 March 2029**.
- The label will reduce in size to 100mm x 100mm.

Q: What will the new component label look like?

- Fresh blood product component labels will be updated to include the following:
 - ISBT128 2D DataMatrix
 - ISBT128 linear barcodes
 - Human readable information.
- The ISBT128 linear barcodes and eye-readable information appearing in the upper portion of the current label will remain.
- A 2D DataMatrix will be added. The placement of the 2D DataMatrix on the label is still being finalised.

Q: Who is responsible for updating the Laboratory Information Systems and barcode readers?

- Facilities using Codabar barcodes transitioning to the ISBT128 Labelling Standard or the 2D DataMatrix will be responsible for updating their Laboratory Information Systems and infrastructure, including barcode scanners.
- Lifeblood will be able to provide a sample of an updated ISBT128 Blood Component Label with the 2D DataMatrix barcode to Australian Health Providers to assist with upgrading IT systems and barcode scanners.

Q: What if I am already using the ISBT128 linear barcode?

- The ISBT128 linear barcodes can still be used without utilising the 2D barcode. Facilities already using the ISBT128 linear barcode can choose to not update their Laboratory Information Systems and infrastructure, including barcode scanners and continue to use the linear code.

Q: What is the advantage of updating infrastructure to use the 2D DataMatrix?

- All commercial blood products supplied under the national blood arrangements (plasma, recombinant and diagnostic) are transitioning to GS1 2D DataMatrix in line with international standards. There is not an option for GS1 linear barcodes with the updated packaging.
- Updating Laboratory Information Systems and infrastructure, including barcode scanners will allow facilities to scan blood and blood products supplied under the national blood arrangements.

Q: Do the implementation dates apply to products available to market or coming off the manufacturing line?

- The implementation dates relate to fresh blood components coming off the manufacturing line and issued to Australian Health Providers. There will be a cross-over period where inventory held at Lifeblood and Australian Health Providers may have both the current and new labels.

Q: Where can I get more information?

- Technical information regarding the ISBT128 standard is available from the following resources.
 - Detailed information about ISBT128 is available via the [Australian Guidelines for the Labelling of Blood Components Using ISBT 128](#)
 - Technical information about ISBT128 is available on the [International Council for Commonality in Blood Banking Automation \(ICCBBA\) website](#)
 - Information on changes to barcode symbology used on blood and blood products funded under the national arrangements is available [Barcode specifications for blood and blood products funded under the National Blood Arrangements](#)