

## What are the alternatives to blood transfusions?

In some circumstances there may be alternatives to blood transfusion and it is important for you and your doctor to consider these options. Alternatives may include:

- ▶ Detecting and treating anaemia before planned surgery.
- ▶ Collecting blood lost during surgery and returning it to you.
- ▶ Specialised procedures and medicines to minimise blood loss.

## Blood transfusion checklist

- ▶ Do you understand why you need a blood/blood product transfusion?
- ▶ Have the risks and benefits of transfusion for your condition been explained?
- ▶ Have alternatives to transfusion been discussed if relevant?
- ▶ Do you have any questions?

A delayed reaction can occur up to two weeks following transfusion. You could experience:

- ▶ **Fevers**
- ▶ **Dark urine**
- ▶ **Yellow coloured skin or eyes**
- ▶ **Severe unexplained bruising or blood spots.**

If any of these symptoms occur, please seek prompt medical advice

## Are you aware....

You have the right to withdraw your consent (permission) for transfusion at any time, but you must notify your doctor.

- ▶ Transfusions of blood or blood products should only be given when the benefits outweigh the risks.
- ▶ The refusal of transfusion when recommended, may result in increased risks to your health.



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

[www.wnhs.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.wnhs.health.wa.gov.au)

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This brochure is for educational purposes only. It should not be used to determine actual treatment choices or decisions. Any such decisions should be made in conjunction with advice from your doctor.

Further information about transfusion can be found at [www.mytransfusion.com.au](http://www.mytransfusion.com.au)



Government of Western Australia  
North Metropolitan Health Service  
Women and Newborn Health Service

# Blood Transfusion Consent Information

Answers to common questions



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If your doctor considers that you may need a transfusion of blood or blood products as part of your medical treatment you will be required to provide consent. The doctor must explain why a transfusion may be required and then ask for your permission.

You should be given information about the benefits and risks in your situation. Be sure to ask questions if there is any part of your treatment that you do not understand.

## The supply of blood

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service collects blood for transfusion in Australia from volunteer donors who are not paid.

There are many procedures in place to ensure that the blood for transfusion is very safe.

Once collected, blood is thoroughly tested for infections and viruses including Hepatitis B and C, Syphilis, T-cell Lymphocytic Virus (HTLV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). If there are any problems identified with the donated blood, it is destroyed. Despite screening of all blood donations, the risk of transferring infections cannot be ruled out. However, the risk is extremely low at less than one in one million transfusions.

## What are blood and blood products?

Blood consists of several components and each has a different purpose for transfusion.

### Red cells:

- ▶ Are given to replace blood lost during surgery or due to a serious injury.
- ▶ Are given to treat anaemia (low numbers or poor quality red blood cells) which may cause health problems.
- ▶ May be needed if your body can't produce enough red blood cells due to illness.

### Platelets:

- ▶ May be required to stop or prevent bleeding if your platelet numbers are too low or aren't working properly.

### Fresh Frozen Plasma and Cryoprecipitate:

- ▶ These blood components are used to replace clotting factors and work with platelets to help blood to clot.

### Plasma derived products:

- ▶ The majority of plasma-derived products are manufactured from voluntary donors. They are used primarily to replace missing or dysfunctional elements of the clotting or immune systems.

Although each preparation has a different purpose, they all undergo rigorous testing and safety measures. Ask your doctor for information about the specific product that will be used in your care.

## What are some of the risks of transfusion?

Most blood transfusions are problem free. However, very rarely, problems can occur and in severe situations can cause serious harm or possibly death.

Rare risks include receiving the wrong blood which could cause kidney failure or breathing difficulties.

The most common reactions include:

- ▶ Fever (high temperature)
- ▶ Rash, itching and/or hives (raised reddened skin)
- ▶ Headache or nausea

You will be monitored closely during your transfusion. If you feel unwell at any time, it is important that you tell a nurse immediately.



## Medic Alert – Blood Product Transfusion

Reactions to a transfusion of blood products are uncommon.

If any of the following symptoms occur up to six hours after your transfusion, present to the Emergency Department with this card.

**Chills • Fever • Nausea • Rash •  
Itching • Difficulty breathing •  
Pink-coloured urine**