

This donation must be prearranged with CBS 4 to 6 weeks prior to a procedure date. It is not available for emergencies.

### What are the risks of being transfused?

Receiving blood in Canada is very safe and there is little risk of complication. Most people do not experience any side effects. Most side effects are mild. Mild symptoms may include headaches, fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, hives or itchy skin. These may be treated with medications like Tylenol® or antihistamines such as Benadryl®.

Reactions can occur anytime during transfusion or up to 4 to 6 hours after transfusion.

Some rare serious complications can include developing a bacterial infection, having a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), having a hemolytic reaction (your body destroys the donor red cells) or being infected with a virus such as HIV or Hepatitis.

*If you feel different or unwell at any time during or after your transfusion, notify the nursing staff or your doctor immediately. If you are at home, go to the nearest Emergency Department. You will be assessed and treated for any reaction that may be occurring.*

**ALL BLOOD DONATIONS ARE SCREENED FOR THE PRESENCE OF HIV, HEPATITIS, SYPHYLLIS AND WEST NILE VIRUS.**

### Should I be concerned if symptoms develop after I leave the hospital?

If you are an outpatient, you will be asked to remain in the facility for up to 1 hour after transfusion so you can be observed for reaction symptoms before leaving.

Before you leave, your nurse will review the signs and symptoms of mild and serious complications as well as what you need to do if any occur.

Some signs and symptoms:

- Fever/chills
- Rash/hives/itchy skin
- Facial/tongue swelling
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea/ vomiting
- Any other new symptom that makes you feel different or unwell

*This pamphlet has been reviewed and revised based on feedback from our clients.*

*Please consider donating the gift of life. Donations are always welcome. It only takes a few minutes and it can be a life saver!*

Canadian Blood Services  
1-888-2 Donate  
(1-888-236-6283)



Provincial Health Line—24 hour health advice

KTHR Quality of Care Coordinator  
1-877-573-6601



# Blood Transfusion Therapy

## What You Should Know



*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

## **Where does the blood and blood product come from?**

Canadian Blood Services (CBS) collects blood from healthy volunteer donors. All blood is tested for transmissible diseases, such as Hepatitis, West Nile Virus and HIV before it is released for use.

Blood Products are produced by pharmaceutical companies that ensure the highest quality and safest product. They are medications that are made from human blood and may also be referred to as fractionation or plasma products.

## **What is a blood transfusion?**

A blood transfusion occurs when a person receives human blood through an intravenous (IV). Human blood is made up of many parts. Three main parts of blood may be transfused- red blood cells, platelets, and plasma. Most often a blood transfusion refers to Red Blood Cells but may include other parts of blood or blood products.

Red blood cells carry oxygen from the lungs to all other parts of the body. They are given to patients who do not have enough of their own red blood cells due to loss of blood from surgery, accidents, or chronic disease. This is the most common blood product transfused.

Platelets are small sticky cells that act as a plug to stop bleeding and are given to patients with low platelet counts and are at risk of bleeding.

Plasma is the fluid that carries your cells throughout your body. It is mostly water but

also has proteins that help the blood clot. Plasma can be made into specialized products used to treat certain illnesses.

## **Other Blood Products**

These may include Rh Immune Globulin (given to pregnant Rh negative women), Intravenous Immune Globulin or IVIG (contains high levels of antibodies), coagulation factor concentrates such as Octaplex, Albumin and other immune globulins given to people to prevent disease after exposure.

**Recombinant Products** are products not made from human blood. These may include clotting Factors which are given to patients to replace missing clotting factors to stop bleeding.

## **What if I need a transfusion?**

If your doctor recommends a blood or blood product as part of your medical treatment, you or your family will be asked to give consent. It is very important that you understand what you are agreeing to. It is important to discuss your feelings about blood transfusion with your surgeon or family doctor. If you have any questions, concerns or you need to clarify information from your doctor or in this pamphlet, ASK your doctor.

When your doctor orders a blood transfusion a sample of your blood will be obtained and tested to determine compatibility with the donated blood.

## **How long does a transfusion take?**

It depends on the product you are receiving, the red blood cells take the longest and can take up to 4 hours per unit.

## **What if I don't want a transfusion?**

If you choose to refuse a transfusion, you will be asked to sign a form stating that you do not want a blood transfusion.

## **How will I know if I received a transfusion?**

When you are discharged from the hospital, you will receive a letter stating that while you were in the hospital, you received blood or a blood product. Please retain this document for your personal health information.

## **Are there any alternatives to having a blood transfusion?**

**Medication:** Your doctor may give you medications such as iron to “build up your blood” before or after surgery.

**Autologous Donation:** Donating your own blood.

If you are having planned surgery, you may be able to donate your own blood. Your physician must make arrangements with CBS 4 to 6 weeks in advance of your surgery date in order for you to make your own blood donation. This blood is marked for your use only. **It will not be used by any other patient if you do not require the transfusion.** Using autologous blood can eliminate the risk of transmissible disease or antibody production to donor blood. If you require more blood than you donated, you may receive blood from other donors. Please discuss this with your doctor.

**Directed Donation:** Having a family member or a friend donate blood for you.

A **directed donation** may be requested in some cases. In Saskatchewan this is only available to parents who are eligible to provide blood for their children. This donation