

# Blood transfusion

## Information for patients

### BLOOD COMPONENTS AND PRODUCTS

Blood for transfusion is separated into different components and manufactured into a number of products. You might receive one or more of the following products.



**Red blood cells** deliver oxygen to your tissues and organs. You might need a red blood cell transfusion if you've lost blood due to an injury or surgery. You might also need them if you have severe anaemia (not enough red blood cells).



**Platelets** are yellow in colour. You might need a platelet transfusion to help prevent or stop internal bleeding (bleeding you cannot see) or external bleeding.



**Fresh frozen plasma** and **cryoprecipitate** are also yellow in colour. They are thawed before they are given to you. These products contain clotting factors that work with platelets to help seal wounds.



You might also be given other types of **manufactured blood products**. These include concentrated blood proteins, such as:

- specific clotting factors to treat bleeding disorders
- immunoglobulins to help fight infections
- albumin to help maintain blood volume.

### WHY DO I NEED A BLOOD TRANSFUSION?

Some common reasons for having a blood transfusion are:



- losing a lot of blood due to an accident, surgery or having a baby
- your body is not making enough blood, or your blood is not working properly due to illness
- anaemia that cannot be treated with iron alone.

Your doctor will talk to you about why you might need a blood transfusion.

### IS A BLOOD TRANSFUSION SAFE?

Blood for transfusion in Australia is very safe. Blood is collected from healthy volunteer donors, but there can be some risks.



#### Infection

All blood is tested for disease. The risk of getting hepatitis C or HIV from a blood transfusion is less than one in a million.



#### Getting the wrong blood

This happens very rarely. This risk is reduced by staff confirming with you your name and date of birth when the blood test is done and before the transfusion.

In addition, there are checking actions in the laboratory.



#### Having a reaction

Reactions are uncommon. A mild reaction may include a rash or fever.

Severe reactions include difficulty breathing, high fever or a serious allergy.

## BEFORE THE TRANSFUSION



The doctor will discuss the risks, benefits and any other options open for you.

You will be given some written information to take away and read.

You, or someone eligible to act for you, will be asked to sign a **consent form**.

## BEFORE YOU HAVE A BLOOD TRANSFUSION YOU WILL NEED A BLOOD TEST



### Blood test

The blood test will check and confirm your blood group.

This is to make sure the blood given to you matches your own blood.



### Checking your identity

Before the blood test the collector will ask your name and date of birth. This is then checked against the test request form.

This is a critical step.

**Speak up** if they have any details incorrect.

## GETTING READY FOR THE TRANSFUSION



### Your comfort

If you need to, please ensure you have been to the toilet before the transfusion starts.



### Vital signs

Your temperature, blood pressure, pulse and breathing will be checked before starting the transfusion.



### Making sure you get the right blood

Two nurses will ask your name and date of birth. Your hospital number, will also be checked on your wristband, the blood bag and the blood prescription. If everything matches the blood transfusion can begin.



These checks are a critical step.

**SPEAK UP** if they have any details incorrect.

## DURING THE TRANSFUSION



Your temperature, blood pressure, pulse and breathing will be checked soon after the transfusion starts.

The nurse will keep a close watch on you. If you feel unwell in any way you must tell the nurse straight away. If you feel unwell during the transfusion a doctor may come to see you.

## AFTER THE TRANSFUSION



Your temperature, blood pressure, pulse and breathing will be checked after the transfusion.

You might have a blood test taken after the blood transfusion to check that your blood count has improved.

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