

Blood Transfusion – Receiving Blood and Blood Products

This guide will help you understand what to expect if you are going to receive a blood transfusion. A blood transfusion is a common procedure where a person receives blood or blood products through an IV (into the vein) line. A person may need a blood transfusion because of blood loss from a surgery or injury, or certain medical conditions or diseases.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have had a reaction to blood or blood products in the past.

Blood transfusions usually occur without any complications. The clinician will ask you to sign a form to consent to the transfusion. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

Before the transfusion

A clinician will take a sample of your blood and send it to the laboratory (lab). The lab will test your blood to make sure that it is a safe match with the donor blood. The lab will check your blood for:

- › Blood type (A, AB, B or O)
- › Rh factor (positive or negative)
- › Antibodies (if there are unexpected antibodies, it may take longer to get blood ready)

In some cases, the lab may need another blood sample to complete the testing.

Before starting the transfusion, the care team will check your personal information and make sure it matches the information on the blood product tag.

During the transfusion

You may eat, drink and move around during the transfusion, if it does not interfere with the IV line and blood bag. Your transfusion may infuse in a short time or it may take up to 4 hours. The nurse will watch you closely before, during and after each transfusion.

Tell your care team if you have any of these symptoms:

- › Pain or swelling at the IV site
- › Trouble breathing or wheezing
- › Itching, rash or hives
- › Feeling hot or cold
- › Feeling sick to your stomach
- › Headache or back or chest pain

After the transfusion

Most people can return to normal activities after a transfusion. Ask your care team for instructions for your care. Sometimes, you can have a delayed reaction to a transfusion. This may occur within 24 hours after your transfusion has ended. Some symptoms can appear up to 2 weeks later.

Call your doctor or care team if you have any of these symptoms:

- › A temperature more than 100.4 degrees F
- › Chills
- › Itching or hives
- › Trouble breathing (shortness of breath)
- › Pain in your side or back (flank pain)
- › Red or dark-colored urine
- › Yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes (this may happen within 2 weeks)



Contact information

For non-urgent matters: Call your doctor or care team.

In case of emergency: Call 911 right away or go to the nearest emergency department. Tell the doctor or care team that you recently had a blood transfusion.

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