

Babies receiving a blood transfusion – a parent's guide



What if I have other worries about blood transfusion?

Please tell your baby's doctor or nurse about any concerns you have, no matter how trivial you think they may be.

Become a blood donor

Nationally we use about 20,800 units of blood per year in the treatment of children. If you would like to help others by becoming a blood donor, please call 0845 7 711 711 or visit our web site www.blood.co.uk

Other Information

If you are interested in finding out more about blood transfusions and have access to the Internet, you might find the following web site useful: www.blood.co.uk

The National Blood Service (NBS) is part of NHS Blood and Transplant, a Special Health Authority within the NHS, and provides the blood that patients receive.

In order to plan for future blood demands, information about which patients receive blood needs to be gathered. We may ask a Trust or GP to provide limited medical information on a sample of patients who have received blood transfusions. Any information that is passed on to the NBS is held securely, with the rights of these individuals protected under the Data Protection Act.

Additional copies of this leaflet can be obtained from the NBS Hospital Liaison Administration Office on 01865 440042.

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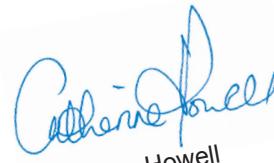
NHS
Blood and Transplant

Dear Parent,

Having a baby admitted to hospital is a difficult time for everyone in the family. To help, we have created this information leaflet. It explains what to expect if your baby needs to receive a blood transfusion as part of their treatment.

Kind regards


Mike Murphy
Clinical Director
Patients


Catherine Howell
Lead Nurse
Hospital Liaison

NHS Blood and Transplant is a Special Health Authority within the NHS, responsible for managing the National Blood Service, UK Transplant and Bio Products Laboratory.

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Like all medical treatments, a blood transfusion should only be given if it is essential. Your doctor will balance the risk of your baby having a blood transfusion against the risk of not having one. Your doctor or nurse should explain to you why your baby needs a blood transfusion.

Why might your baby need a blood transfusion?

Newborn babies are frequently anaemic (have a reduced number of red blood cells), particularly if they are born early. This may be because of medical problems, but also because babies who are unwell require a large number of blood tests to monitor their progress. If your baby needs an operation, a blood transfusion may be needed to replace any blood lost during surgery.

Are transfusions safe?

Almost always, yes. The biggest risk from receiving a blood transfusion is being given the wrong blood. To ensure that your baby receives the correct blood, staff make careful identification checks of both your baby and the bag of blood they will be given. This is why it is important that your baby wears an identification band. If you are with your baby, you may also be asked to confirm your baby's full name and date of birth. If you decide to change your baby's name for any reason, it is important to tell your doctor or nurse, so that your baby's records can be updated.

Compared to other everyday risks, the likelihood of getting an infection from a blood transfusion is very low. All blood donors are unpaid volunteers and they are very carefully selected and tested to make sure that the blood they donate is as safe as possible.

The risk of getting hepatitis from a blood transfusion is currently about 1 in

500,000 for hepatitis B and 1 in 30 million for hepatitis C. The chance of getting HIV or HTLV infection is about 1 in 5 million. Although the risk of getting variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) from a blood transfusion is probably low with a single blood transfusion episode, the risk of any infection will increase with repeated episodes of blood transfusion. Each year, approximately 2 million units of blood are transfused in England and there have been just a handful of cases where patients are known to have become infected with vCJD from blood transfusion.

How is blood given?

A blood transfusion is usually given through a tiny tube that goes directly into a vein. Each bag of blood can take up to four hours to give, but can be safely given more quickly if needed. Your baby may be given more than one bag of blood during their transfusion. If your baby needs to be given more than one bag of blood, it is normally arranged for it to come from the same blood donor.

How will my baby feel during their blood transfusion?

Most babies will not feel any different during their blood transfusion, but reactions to transfusion sometimes occur. Your baby will be closely monitored, but please inform staff if you have any concerns about your baby whilst they are receiving their blood transfusion.

Can I donate my blood for my child?

This is a common question but there are good reasons why this is not done. Firstly, the risk of infection from blood donated by a relative is no lower than from an unrelated blood donor. Secondly, there are increased risks of some types of serious reactions following blood transfusion from relatives, and it is better to avoid these.