

iTRANSFUSEFACTSHEET

all about blood

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WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED A BLOOD TRANSFUSION?

TRISH ROBERTS

Can I receive any blood for a transfusion?

No, a patient must only receive compatible blood, as the wrong type can cause a life-threatening reaction.

How is compatible blood chosen for a patient?

A sample of blood is taken from the patient for a 'crossmatch'. The crossmatch determines the patient's blood group and whether they have any antibodies. Identification of the correct blood group ensures the blood chosen for transfusion does not react with the patient's own blood.

What information should I expect to be given before a transfusion?

The doctor should explain why the transfusion is required and talk about the benefit expected and also any risks of receiving blood. The discussion should include the possible benefits and risks of alternatives including avoiding transfusion.

How does the hospital prepare for a transfusion?

There needs to be a medical prescription (order) stating the blood component required, how much is needed and the period of time the transfusion should be given over. The doctor will document why the component is being given and any special instructions for the patient's care during the transfusion.

The patient will have their blood pressure, temperature, pulse and respiratory rate checked before and regularly during the transfusion, to determine if the patient is having a reaction.

Where are the blood components and products stored in the hospital?

There is a laboratory in the hospital that liaises directly with the Blood Service.



Between the two, they work to make sure the blood components and products needed are in stock, and that special blood components and products can be sourced when required.

It is also the laboratory's job to make sure the components and products are kept safe and at the correct temperatures, that frozen components are thawed and used within specified times. The laboratory also ensures the right components and products are collected for the right patient.

How is a blood transfusion given?

The blood is given to a patient through a vein by an intravenous (IV) access device; a sterile thin plastic tube that sits in the patient's vein.

Another piece of sterile tubing is used to connect the blood bag to the IV access and the blood is transfused through this.

The transfusion is usually given one red cell pack at a time over one-and-a-half to four hours each.

PACKFACT

In an emergency a bag of red cells can be given in under a minute.

What happens during a transfusion?

The doctor will have a discussion with the patient about what they can expect to occur; how the transfusion will make them feel and what will be happening during and after the transfusion.

The information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to be medical or professional advice. The disclaimer found at transfusion.com.au applies to this fact sheet.

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 Australian Red Cross
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