

## Consent for blood transfusion

Before receiving a blood transfusion, you will be asked to provide your consent. The decision to proceed with the transfusion is entirely your choice. In providing consent you should understand why you need a transfusion and whether other therapies may help you, other than transfusion.

You have the right to refuse, however you need to fully understand the consequences of this before doing so.

A transfusion will not be given without your consent unless it is deemed necessary in a life-threatening emergency. If you do not want to have a blood transfusion for religious or other reasons, it is extremely important to discuss this with your doctor.

### Checklist to help you decide

Before agreeing to a blood transfusion, consider the following questions:

1. Do I understand why I need the transfusion?
2. Am I aware of the possible risks and side effects?
3. Do I know the benefits of this transfusion?
4. Have alternative options been explained to me?
5. Do I fully understand the information and have all my questions been answered?

If you are unsure about any of these points, ask your healthcare provider for more information.



## Where to find more information

Visit **Australian Red Cross Lifeblood:** [lifeblood.com.au/patients](http://lifeblood.com.au/patients)

Or talk your treating doctor.



[canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au](http://canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au)

### Acknowledgement of Country



Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this region.



**Accessibility:** How to get this information in other ways.

#### To get this information:

- in large print
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call **131 450**

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# Blood Transfusions



## Do I need a blood transfusion?

You may require a blood transfusion if you have had major surgery, a serious accident, or have recently given birth. Additionally, transfusions may be necessary for individuals with conditions that require blood products, such as blood disorders, kidney disease, or cancer treatment.

## What are blood and blood products?

Blood and Blood products refer to any part of donated blood that can be transfused to a patient. Donated blood is separated into three components: **red blood cells**, **platelets**, and **plasma**.

## Different types of blood transfusions

**Red blood cells:** transport oxygen throughout the body. These are typically given to people with low haemoglobin levels (anaemia), or significant blood loss.

**Platelets:** help prevent or stop bleeding. Certain medical conditions, medications or treatments may reduce platelet levels or impair their function. Platelet transfusions appear **yellow in colour**.

**Fresh frozen plasma and cryoprecipitate:** assist in blood clotting and help control bleeding. These products are also **yellow in colour**.

## Common risks of blood transfusion:

- **Mild reactions**, such as a slight fever or skin rash
- **Fluid overload**, which may cause breathing difficulties, particularly in older adults and individuals with heart conditions.

## Rare but serious risks:

- **Receiving mismatched blood**, which can cause severe reactions.
- **Severe allergic reactions or transfusion acute lung injury (TRALI)**
- **Infections**, such as bacteria or viruses, though this risk is extremely low (less than 1 in 1 million) due to strict screening and testing processes.

Healthcare staff are highly trained to monitor any adverse reactions and respond promptly if complications arise.

## How is a blood transfusion administered?

Before receiving a blood transfusion, a blood test is performed to determine your blood group. The healthcare professional collecting your blood sample will confirm your **name and date of birth** to ensure accuracy.

If a **red blood cell transfusion** is needed, the blood you receive must be matched to your blood group.

A **blood transfusion** is administered through a vein, usually in your **arm or hand**, using a soft plastic tube (intravenous canula).

## Duration of blood product transfusions

The number of units and type of blood product you receive will depend on your medical condition.

- **Red blood cells:** 2 to 3 hours per unit
- **Platelets:** 30 to 60 minutes per unit
- **Fresh frozen plasma:** 30 to 60 minutes per unit.

## Monitoring during the transfusion

Throughout the transfusion, you will be **closely observed** by a nurse. Your **temperature, heart rate, breathing rate**, and **blood pressure** will be monitored to detect any reactions.

If you feel unwell or have concerns during the transfusion, inform the nurse immediately.

## Ensuring your safety

Strict identity checks are performed at the bedside in multiple stages to ensure you receive the correct blood:

- Your identity is verified when a blood sample is taken.
- Just before the transfusion, staff will confirm your details. This will occur every time you receive a bag (unit).
- You must wear an identification (ID) wrist band and provide your full name and date of birth when asked.

These precautions help prevent errors, such as receiving the wrong blood. If you notice any discrepancies, speak up immediately. Always check that your personal details, including spelling, are 100% correct.

## What are the risks of blood transfusion?

Australia has one of the safest blood supply systems in the world.