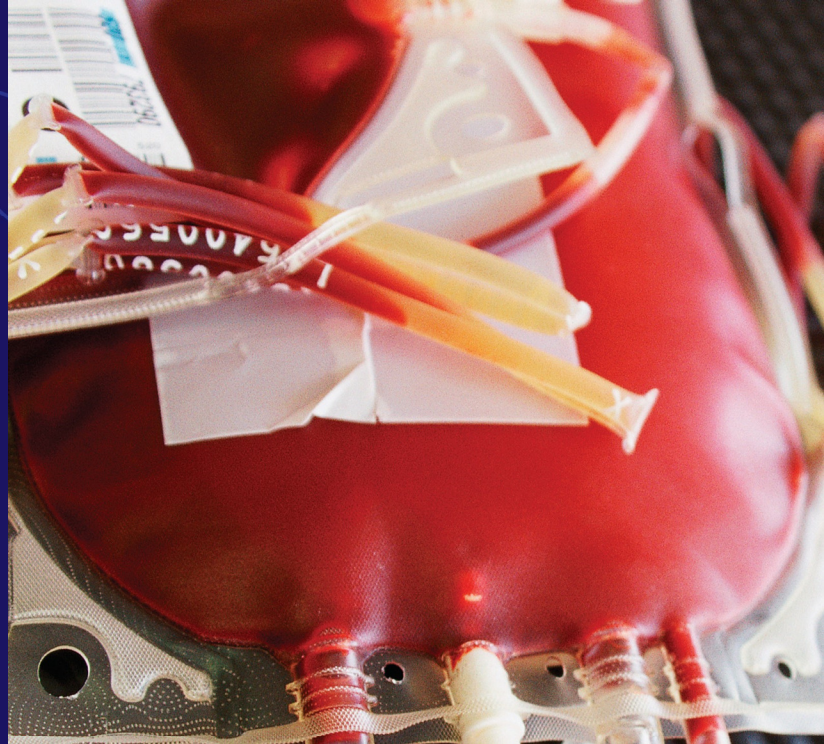


A Patient's Guide to Blood Transfusions



During your medical treatment at St. Vincent Regional Hospital, your doctor may determine that you would benefit from a blood transfusion. You will be asked to sign a consent form giving St. Vincent permission to perform a transfusion if it becomes necessary. This information will help you make an informed decision about receiving a transfusion. If you have additional questions, your doctor will be happy to answer them.

What is a blood transfusion?

A blood transfusion is donated blood given to patients with abnormal blood levels. The patient may have abnormal blood levels due to blood loss from trauma or surgery, or as a result of certain medical problems. The transfusion is done with one or more of the following blood products: whole blood, red blood cells, platelets, plasma, or cryoprecipitate.

What are potential benefits of a blood transfusion?

If your body does not have enough of one of the components of blood, you may develop serious life-threatening complications.

- **Red blood cells (RBCs):** Carry oxygen from your lungs to your organs and tissues. They also take carbon dioxide back to your lungs to breathe out. Adequate oxygen is very important to maintain life.
- **Platelets and cryoprecipitate:** Help to prevent or control bleeding by aiding in clotting.
- **Plasma:** Replaces blood volume and also may help to prevent or control bleeding.

Are there any alternatives?

The alternatives available and how well they work will depend on your situation.

Medications: Sometimes medications can help your body produce its own blood or prevent/control bleeding.

Pre-Operative Autologous Donation: Patients can donate their own blood before surgery for future use. (MUST be scheduled with Vitalant)

Directed Donation: A friend or relative makes a blood donation for a specific individual. (MUST be scheduled with Vitalant)

Intra-Operative Autologous Transfusion/Hemodilution: Collecting your own blood during surgery to be given back to you.

If the blood loss is too great, or if you are in a potentially life-threatening situation, these alternatives may not work quickly enough to help you.

How safe are blood transfusions?

Blood donors are carefully screened and blood is subjected to rigorous testing before it is approved for transfusion. The chance of acquiring an infectious disease from a blood transfusion is estimated to be less than one in 2 million.

Like every medical procedure, blood transfusion involves some risk. While all blood transfused at St. Vincent Regional Hospital is tested according to the latest nationally accepted standards, no testing can eliminate 100 percent of the risks associated with blood transfusion. In rare cases, transmission of blood-borne disease is possible, but blood testing procedures are constantly being researched and updated.

What are the risks?

People who have blood transfusions during surgery may be more likely to experience negative outcomes such as wound infections and delayed recovery. Because donor blood is not your own blood, your body's immune system responds to the foreign blood much in the same way it would respond to an organ transplant.

What can I expect during the transfusion?

Before your transfusion, your nurse will:

- Check your vitals (blood pressure, pulse and temperature).
- Make sure the donor blood type is a match to your blood.
- Make sure that the supplied blood is the product ordered by your doctor and is labeled with your name.

During your transfusion, your nurse will:

- Remain with you for the first 15 minutes.
- Recheck your vitals at 15 minutes.
- Recheck your vitals per policy and at the end.



How do I know if I am having a reaction?

If you experience a new onset of any of the symptoms listed below during or after your blood transfusion, contact your nurse or physician immediately. Your nurse will watch you closely for a reaction.

- bleeding, pain, or new bruising at the IV site,
- temperature of 102 degrees F or higher,
- chills,
- back pain,
- nausea,
- swelling,
- trouble breathing,
- itching, hives or rash, or
- jaundice (yellow skin).

Can I refuse to receive a blood transfusion?

You have the right to refuse a blood transfusion that your doctor has ordered. You must be aware of the risks and consequences of not accepting the transfusion. As a patient, it is your responsibility to discuss this with your physician before making your decision.



Patient Blood Management

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