

## What steps are taken to ensure that blood is safe?

The Irish Blood Transfusion Service has many safeguards on our national blood supply. They are very carefully selected and tested to make sure that the blood they donate is as safe as possible.

The risk of getting:

HIV is estimated to be 1 in 9,000,000 units of blood transfused.

Hepatitis C is estimated to be 1 in 20,700,000 units of blood transfused

Hepatitis B is estimated to be 1 in 750,000 units of blood transfused.

While there is a very low risk of contracting variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (vCJD) from blood the IBTS have introduced precautions to reduce the risk of transmission. For further information or more recent updates on the above please log onto [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie)



### Further Information.

You can discuss any concerns you have about the blood transfusion with your doctor. If you would like any additional information please contact the haemovigilance nurse or your Consultant on the number provided below.

Bon Secours Hospital Tralee  
Tel: 066 714 9800

This Leaflet was designed and prepared for your information by the Hospital Blood Transfusion Committee.



Bon Secours Hospital Tralee

## Blood Transfusion Patient Information Leaflet



**Right Patient, Right Blood!**

**Have you been asked to  
state your Name and Date of  
Birth?**

## What is a Blood Transfusion?

A blood transfusion is giving a patient blood or a component of blood such as red cells, platelets or plasma. A transfusion is given through a small plastic cannula in vein in your arm.

### 1. Red blood cells:

Red blood cells carry oxygen around the body. A lack of red blood cells is known as anaemia.

### 2. Platelets:

Platelets are cells contained in blood which help control bleeding.

### 3. Plasma:

Plasma is a straw coloured fluid of the blood that contains proteins, including those necessary for blood clotting. Plasma transfusions may be necessary to control bleeding.

## Why do patients need Blood Transfusions?

The decision to give a blood transfusion to a patient is made only after careful consideration.

### Common reasons for blood transfusion are

- Blood loss in surgery or after an accident
- Anaemia (which is not having enough of your own red blood cells)
- Blood disorders

## Are there alternatives to having a blood Transfusion?

Some illnesses or dietary deficiencies, which cause anaemia may be treated with medications including iron or vitamins. If you would like further information please ask your doctor for advice.

## Matching Blood

One of the most important ways of achieving a safe transfusion is to make sure you get the right blood. You can help reduce the small risk of being given the wrong blood by asking your nurse or doctor to check that it is the right blood for you. You must be correctly identified at each stage of the transfusion to make sure that you get the right blood, including when blood samples are taken before the transfusion. Wearing an identification band with your correct details is essential. You will be asked to state your full name and date of birth, and the details on your identification band will be checked before each blood sample is taken and before each bag of blood is given. It is important to remind your nurse or doctor to ask you this. If you have a specific requirement in relation to blood, please tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

## Reactions to Blood Transfusion

Your nurse will observe you carefully before, during and after your transfusion. If you feel unwell during or if you should inform your doctor or nurse immediately. Some people may develop a temperature, chills or a rash.

These reactions are usually mild and are easily treated with medicines such as paracetamol or anti-histamines or by slowing down or stopping the transfusion. Severe reactions to blood are extremely rare. If they do occur, staff are trained to recognise and treat them.

Reactions may occur in the first 24 hours or up to 2 weeks after the transfusion.

### Symptoms which may occur during or within 24 hours post transfusion include

Apprehension/ Faintness/Weakness.  
Nausea/Vomiting.  
Breathlessness/Chest Pain/Back Pain.  
Hives/Rash/Itch/Flushing  
Fever/Rigors/Chills.

### Symptoms which may occur up to 2 weeks post transfusion include

Jaundice/Dark or Red Urine.  
Dark red urine

If you experience any of the above symptoms and have been discharged home please contact your GP or your medical Consultant. They will advise you as to the treatment that may be required.

