

Blood Transfusion: What You Need To Know

What is Blood Management?

Your health care team will manage your care before, during and after your procedure or surgery to make sure you receive blood.

Your health care team will carefully monitor your condition and will work hard to keep your blood loss as low as possible. You will receive blood, blood products or both, only if or when you need it.

What is a Blood Transfusion?

A blood transfusion is a way to replace blood lost during surgery, accident, illness or childbirth. You will receive blood that is compatible with your blood type.

Why Would You Need a Transfusion?

There are different reasons you may need a blood transfusion. You may need blood if you:

- lose a lot of blood from an injury, or during surgery or childbirth
- have anemia (Anemia is a condition of not having enough red blood cells to carry oxygen through your body.)
- have a clotting condition that causes you to bleed too much or too easily.

What Parts of Blood May You Receive During a Transfusion?

- **red blood cells** (They carry oxygen. You may receive them for anemia or bleeding.)
- **platelets** (They are cells that group together to help your body stop bleeding.)

- **plasma** (This is the liquid part of blood that helps blood clot.)
- **cryoprecipitate** (These are proteins in plasma that stop bleeding.)

What Transfusion Options Do You Have?

Together, you and your doctor will decide which option is best for you. Transfusion options are:

- allogeneic blood donation**
This is blood donated by a healthy person. The blood is carefully screened and tested.
- directed blood donation**
A family member or friend with the same blood type may donate blood for you. This type of donation has not been proven to be safer than the general community blood supply. The blood is carefully screened and tested the same way as blood from an unknown donor.
- autologous blood donation**
You may donate your own blood before surgery. In general, it is not recommended. It can lead to anemia and doesn't lower your risk of needing a transfusion.
- cell salvage**
This is a process used to collect your blood, clean it and return it to your body during or after surgery. Known as "bloodless" surgery, this process can eliminate or reduce the need for a transfusion.

What are the Benefits, Risks and Other Options?

Knowing the benefits, risks and alternatives of a blood transfusion will help you make an informed decision with your doctor about the best care for you.

<p>Benefits</p>	<p>Blood management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ helps prevent anemia ■ decreases bleeding ■ helps you recover better or faster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ makes sure the transfusion is truly needed ■ helps lower your risk of getting an infection, disease (such as hepatitis C) or other side effects.
<p>Risks</p>	<p>Blood transfusion risks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ side effects or reactions to the blood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — chills — breathing problems — fever — flushed skin (reddened skin on your face and neck) — hives or rash — upset stomach (nausea) or throwing up (vomiting) — pain in your back, chest or arms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — rapid heart rate — feeling weak or dizzy. ■ delayed reaction that could occur days or weeks after a transfusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — fever — muscle aches — dark-colored urine. ■ exposure to germs, such as viruses, bacteria or parasites ■ death (This is rare.)
<p>Alternatives (other treatment options)</p>	<p>Treating anemia before surgery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If you have anemia, your doctor may prescribe medicine (such as iron or vitamin B12) that will help your body make more red blood cells. This may help prevent the need for a transfusion. 	<p>Options during surgery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Blood can be removed from your body and replaced with intravenous (IV) fluids. Blood lost during surgery can be collected, cleaned and returned to your body. This process is known as “bloodless” surgery since your own blood is returned to your body during surgery.