

Discharge Instructions: Blood Transfusions for Adults



You've recently had a blood transfusion. A blood transfusion may be done when you have lost blood because of an injury or during surgery. It can also be done because of diseases or conditions that affect the blood. Blood is made up of several different parts (blood products). These include red blood cells, platelets, and plasma. You may have gotten some or all of these blood products during your transfusion. Blood for transfusion is usually donated from another person (donor). In some cases, you can donate your own blood for a future planned surgery. Strict measures are taken to make sure that donated blood is safe before it's given to you. But, there are some things to keep an eye out for in the hours and days after a blood transfusion.

Some people get a fever in the hours after transfusion. This usually isn't serious but if you have other symptoms along with it, it may be more serious. In some cases, the body can have an allergic reaction to the blood received in a transfusion. These can be mild to severe (anaphylaxis). A more serious reaction is when the body attacks the red blood cells you receive. This is a medical emergency. Sometimes too much blood is transfused or too much iron gets in the body. This is more common with multiple transfusions.

Home care

- You will likely have a bandage over the transfusion site. Keep it dry and remove it as advised by your healthcare provider.
- Once you remove the bandage, keep the transfusion site clean. To do this, wash the skin with clean, running water and mild soap. Gently pat it dry.

Follow up

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised.

When to seek medical care

Most transfusions are problem free. In some cases, reactions occur. Most are mild. Rarely, serious and life-threatening reactions occur. These can happen within seconds to minutes during the transfusion or a week to a few months after the transfusion. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the symptoms below. In some cases, you may be told to go to the nearest emergency room:

- Fever 100.4°F (38°C) or as advised by your healthcare provider
- Chills
- Purple spots on the skin, hives, or itching
- Swelling of feet or ankles
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Chronic coughing
- Bleeding from the urinary tract, abdomen, colon, or rectum
- Red or dark urine

Call 911

Call 911 if you have any of the following:

- Trouble breathing, shortness of breath, wheezing, or chest tightness
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, or throat
- Chest or belly pain
- Trouble awakening
- Fainting, dizziness, or loss of consciousness
- Fast (rapid) heart rate or pulse

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