

Care Gram

Blood Transfusion

Why a Blood Transfusion?

You may need to have a blood transfusion while you are sick or in the Hospital. It may be given to improve your health or save your life. Your doctor will explain why you need blood. If you need a blood transfusion during surgery or a treatment, the risks of not receiving blood are greater than the risks of transfusion.

Donated Blood

- Almost all blood components come from the American Red Cross. The American Red Cross completes a thorough health history and lifestyle behavior screening of all blood donors. They also test donated blood for diseases before approving as safe for use.

How the Procedure Works

- First, a technician draws a blood sample and places a special blood ID bracelet on your arm. **Do not remove this bracelet for 72 hours in case it is needed again.**
- The sample is sent to the Lab and tested for your blood type. It is screened for antibodies and then matched to a unit of blood in the Lab. The process usually takes 1 to 2 hours.
- The blood will be infused through an IV in your arm or an implanted “port” if you already have one. A pump is set to make sure the blood infuses in about 2 to 4 hours.
- Before the blood transfusion is started, you will be asked to state your name and birth date. Your ID bracelet will be checked with the unit of blood for an exact match.
- Your blood pressure, temperature and heart rate will be monitored often by a nurse during the transfusion.
- Patients who receive blood as an outpatient are sent home after they are given instructions for personal home care.

Risks of Blood Transfusion

There is always a risk of a transfusion reaction, but it is rare. Symptoms of a reaction may include:

- Fever with or without chills
- Flushing
- Hives and/or itching or rash
- Nausea or vomiting
- Feeling of uneasiness
- Dizziness
- Rapid heartbeat
- Trouble breathing, wheezing
- Chest or back pain
- Blood in urine or other unusual bleeding

Let your nurse know if you have any of these symptoms during the transfusion. If you have been discharged and start to have these symptoms, call your doctor or go to the Emergency Department. Rare and unpredictable reactions may occur, which can lead to shock and even death. There are also rare instances of transfusion-related infections, such as Hepatitis, West Nile Virus, HIV, other viruses, bacteria, or diseases as yet unknown.

This Care Gram is for information purposes only. It may become out-of-date over time. Ask a doctor or a healthcare professional about your specific condition.



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