

## WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO TRANSFUSION?

Other treatments instead of transfusion may be able to be used for certain surgeries. When you meet with the doctor the choice to use either transfusion or another type of treatment may be discussed.

Alternatives to transfusion include:

- Autologous blood donation is when patients donate their own blood and have it stored until their surgery. Only patients having surgery that normally need transfusion are suited for this program, and they must meet donation rules. Donations start about four weeks before surgery.
- Directed donations are donations by a parent/guardian to a child 16 years old or younger.
- Erythropoietin therapy is a drug treatment to increase the number of red blood cells that a patient has going into surgery. This treatment starts a few weeks before surgery. This might also be used to treat anemia. The patient may need to cover the cost of this treatment.

- Salvaging of blood during surgery is another option, but it is not routinely available at Credit Valley Hospital. This alternative involves collecting blood just before surgery or blood lost during surgery and giving it back to the patient.

- No transfusion is also a choice. There may be a risk to your health if you do not receive a transfusion. This should be discussed with your doctor.

## WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A TRANSFUSION?

Transfusions do save lives, they help patient health and they can help quality of life. Blood products are an every day part of medical care. They allow major surgeries to be carried out and some medical treatments depend on them.

# Patient Information On Transfusion



This information is provided for persons who may need a transfusion of blood or blood products. It contains answers to common questions about blood and transfusions.

## **IS IT SAFE?**

Receiving blood is safer today than ever. Careful questioning is used to select donors and the most up to date scientific methods are used to test donated blood for viruses and diseases. These safety measures have lowered the chance of disease transmission. Recent numbers show the chance of getting HIV from a transfusion is 1 in 4.7 million. For hepatitis B, the chance is 1 in 82,000 and for hepatitis C it is 1 in 3.1 million. Further risks that your doctor can discuss, occur with a total rate of 1 in 5,000. These risks are small compared to the potential benefits of getting a blood product. For comparison, the chance of dying in an automobile accident is 1 in 10,000.

## **WHAT IS BLOOD?**

Blood has three main parts. These are red blood cells, platelets and the liquid part called plasma. These are usually made into separate blood products. Blood is needed for the human body to function properly. Red blood cells carry oxygen. Red cell products are used for patients who have lost blood due to an accident or during major surgery, or for patients who have an illness that lowers the number of their own red blood cells (anemia). Platelets help in blood clotting and wound healing. Platelets are used to treat bleeding in patients when there is lower numbers of platelets or if they are not working properly. Plasma is the clear liquid part of blood, which holds the red blood cells and platelets. Plasma has many proteins and factors needed to form a clot. Plasma is most often given to patients with serious clotting problems.

## **WHY DO I NEED A TRANSFUSION?**

Transfusions are needed to correct or help a patient's condition. As different parts of the blood do different things in the body, the illness or condition of the patient will point to which part will be needed.

## **HOW ARE BLOOD PRODUCTS TRANSFUSED?**

Most blood products are given into a vein (intravenous) and some are given into the muscle (injection). Transfusions can take up to 4 hours depending on the patient and the product being transfused.

## **WHAT ARE SOME PROBLEMS THAT MAY OCCUR WITH TRANSFUSION?**

- Minor and temporary reactions occur in about 1 in 100 people. These reactions include fever, chills or rash during or shortly after transfusion.
- All blood is tested for infectious diseases, but there is still a very small risk of disease transmission.
- Bruising or swelling might occur where the needle is put into the vein.
- Some patients may form antibodies following a transfusion. This is called allo-immunization. This has no symptoms and does not put the patient's life in danger. In this case, extra testing will be needed for future transfusions.