# A GENERAL GUIDE TO BLOOD TRANSFUSION

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS & FAMILIES

## Blood transfusion

A blood transfusion is a procedure where you receive blood through an intravenous cannula (IV) inserted into a vein.

You may need a blood transfusion if your body cannot make parts of your own blood, if your blood cells are not working properly, or if you have lost blood.

It is often possible to reduce or avoid the need for a transfusion.

- Discuss with your health care team the best way to treat anaemia (low number or quality of red blood cells).
- If you are having surgery, discuss with your health care team the need to stop or withhold certain medications, so your risk of bleeding is reduced.
- Your health care team may suggest having your blood collected and returned to you, during some types of major surgery.
- If you do need a transfusion, you should receive only what is needed to relieve your symptoms. For example, once you have received one bag of red blood cells, you should then be reviewed to see if another bag is needed. One bag may be enough.

## Parts of blood that may be needed

Red cells carry oxygen to body tissues and organs. They may be given if your levels are low, or you have lost blood.

Platelets help blood to clot and are given to prevent or stop bleeding.

Plasma contains factors that work with platelets to help blood to clot and may be given to prevent or stop bleeding.

Other blood products are given for a wide range of reasons, for example, to improve the immune system or to replace some clotting factors.

For more detailed information on blood transfusion, please visit www.mytransfusion.com.au

## If you need a transfusion

You will need to have a blood test to establish your blood group and make sure your type is available.

When you are having your blood test, you should help to check that all the details on the form and the tube are correct and exactly match. This includes your full name spelt correctly and your date of birth.



**Disclaimer**
This fact sheet is for your educational purposes only. It should not be used to guide and/or determine actual treatment choices or decisions. Any such decisions should be made in conjunction with advice from your treating doctor or other health professionals.