

# 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 saying it is safe to use.
- You may also choose to donate blood for your own use before having surgery.
- Since blood is donated, there is no charge for the blood itself. There is a fee charged to the Hospital and most insurance companies cover the cost.

### 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. It is 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 hours. In some cases, it may infuse over 3 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 written home instructions.

### Risks of Blood Transfusion

There is always a risk of a transfusion reaction, but it is rare. Some of the risks 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 room.

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 It may become out-of-date over time.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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