



## Pathology Department

# Advice for Patients after a Blood Transfusion

This leaflet provides you with some important information about the blood transfusion you have received whilst under the care of Dorset County Hospital NHS foundation Trust.

### Transfusion reactions

Most blood transfusions take place without any problems, but having a blood transfusion carries a very small risk of developing side effects.

The symptoms are usually caused by an immune reaction to the blood you have received and occur unpredictably, but regular blood transfusions may increase the chance of them happening. However, they are still uncommon even in patients that regularly receive blood transfusions.

The symptoms may develop within several hours, or in some cases may happen days or weeks later. They are usually mild but it is very important that you report any unusual or unexpected symptoms to a doctor or nurse.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

If you experience any of the following:

- A high temperature (above 38°C)
- Feeling feverish, hot and clammy
- Shivering or 'cold chills'
- Breathing problems
- Extreme tiredness
- Blood in your urine
- Passing much less, or very dark, urine
- Itchy skin rash
- Unexpected or unexplained bruising
- Jaundice (yellow colour of the white of your eyes or your skin).

If you have been discharged please contact your GP or call NHS 111 service as soon as possible for advice if you experience any of symptoms listed above – please ensure that you tell them you have recently received a blood transfusion.

In the rare event of an emergency (i.e. a life threatening problem, for example difficulty with breathing), call 999 for an ambulance.

## What treatments are available?

Most symptoms can be treated with simple medications like paracetamol or an antihistamine (allergy medication).

More serious reactions may need treatment in hospital, however this is rare. You may be given paracetamol or antihistamine before future blood transfusions if you have experienced a reaction before.

## Please note

New national rules say that anyone who has had a blood transfusion **cannot** be a blood donor in the future. Therefore please note that after this transfusion, you cannot donate blood.

## Further Information

NHS Blood and Transplant  
<https://www.blood.co.uk/>

If you would like further non-urgent information or advice about this, or any other aspects of blood transfusion, please discuss this with your hospital doctor, nurse, midwife or transfusion practitioner before you go home or with your GP once you have been discharged.

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Written: August 2017  
Approved: August 2017  
Review date: August 2020  
Edition: 1

### References:

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Norfolk, D. 2013. *Handbook of Transfusion Medicine*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. [Online]. Norwich: TSO information & publishing solutions. Available from: <http://www.transfusionguidelines.org.uk/transfusion-handbook> [Accessed: 20 July 17].

If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, please email [pals@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@dchft.nhs.uk).



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