

Questions for Your Doctor:

Why do I need blood?

What are the risks if I choose not to receive blood?

What can be done before surgery so I won't need to receive blood?

What can I do in the future to help prevent the need for blood?



Blood Transfusions

Important patient information
about receiving blood or
blood products

If I do receive blood, how might it help me?

What foods are high in iron?

Other questions:



The Role of Blood in Your Body

Red blood cells bring oxygen to your tissues and organs. Oxygen is carried by a protein in the blood called hemoglobin. When the hemoglobin count is lower than normal it is called anemia (low blood count). Our bodies have ways to adjust and handle low blood count, but anemia is a condition that should be treated.

Anemia

■ Symptoms

- Weakness
- Feeling very tired
- Trouble sleeping
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heartbeat
- Headache
- Dizziness or fainting
- Pale skin

■ **Treatment:** Anemia can often be treated with a blend of medications such as iron and vitamins, and good nutrition; however, your doctor may decide that you need to receive donor blood to treat the anemia.



When Might Donor Blood Be Needed?

The timing and reason for needing blood is based on your condition at that time. Your doctor will explain the reason, the risks, and any other choices instead of blood. Donor blood is needed when the body is not able to make blood quickly enough due to:

- Blood loss caused by bleeding, injury or surgery
- Blood cell damage caused by immune reaction or disease
- Serious illness, medication or chemotherapy

Blood products such as plasma or platelets may be given for heavy bleeding or problems with clotting.

Before surgery

If you are having surgery, your doctor may order a complete blood count test during the weeks before surgery and, if needed, give you a blend of medications that help your body make more red blood cells.

During surgery

You may need blood products during surgery. Blood saving methods are often used in surgery so that you will not need to receive donor blood.

How Donor Blood Is Located

Our blood supply relies on blood donors. Each person who gives blood is questioned carefully about past or present illnesses that would affect the safety of the blood supply. Every unit of blood goes through many tests and any blood that shows a “positive” result for a disease that could be spread is destroyed and not used. BayCare uses blood from our community blood bank. They only provide blood that meets all testing guidelines. Like any medication or procedure, there is a chance for side effects. See the section on possible risks of receiving blood.

Blood Type

Your blood will always be typed before you receive any donor blood to make sure it is safe for you. The results will provide your blood type: A, B, AB or O, and if you are Rh negative or positive depending on what antigens are present on your red blood cells. Antigens are made up of different sugars and proteins that were passed on to you from your mother and father.

Consent

When blood is needed you must agree to it and sign the consent form. Your doctor will tell you the reasons why you need the blood and if there is any other treatment you can utilize.

After Receiving Blood:

- You may have a fever up to 99 degrees. Check with your doctor to see if you can take Tylenol or aspirin.
- If within the next 24–72 hours, you have any of the following symptoms, call your doctor immediately: Chills, fever above 99 degrees, bad headache, nausea, chest or back pain, redness at the needle site, red tinged or dark coffee-colored urine.
- If you are unable to contact your doctor, go to the Emergency Room.

Risks of Receiving Blood:

- **Allergic reactions:** These are usually mild and easy to treat. Bad reactions are very rare.
- **Fever:** Tell your doctor if you have had a fever after getting blood in the past. Before you receive blood we may give you medication to prevent you from having a fever again.
- **Hemolytic reactions:** These reactions are rare, can sometimes be serious, and can cause bleeding or kidney problems. They happen if you get blood that is not the right match to your blood. That is why we will “type” your blood and verify your identification and blood product information before we give you donor blood.
- **Diseases:** All donor blood is carefully tested for diseases that spread from person to person. The donors have to answer many questions to make sure they are safe donors. The risk is very small, but the tests will not totally remove the risk.

Questions or concerns should be discussed with your physician prior to transfusion.