

Please affix patient label or complete details below.

Full name:

Hospital number:

NHS number:

DOB:

Advice for patients following a blood transfusion

Whilst under the care of Papworth Hospital you have received a blood transfusion. This leaflet provides you with some important information in relation to this.

Being a blood donor yourself

Unfortunately, now you have received a blood transfusion you can no longer donate blood yourself.

People who have received a transfusion since 1980 are now excluded from giving blood themselves as a precautionary measure against the possible risk of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) being transmitted by blood and blood products.

Transfusion reactions

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

These may develop within several hours, or in some cases may happen days or weeks later.

These side effects are often mild, but it is still important to report any unusual or unexpected symptoms to a doctor or nurse.

Please contact your GP or NHS walk-in centre for advice if you experience any of the below symptoms - ensuring that you explain that you have recently received a blood transfusion.

- A high temperature - feeling feverish, hot and clammy
- Shivering or 'cold chills'
- Breathing problems
- Extreme tiredness
- Passing blood in your urine
- Passing much less or very dark urine
- Itchy skin rash
- Pain in the lower back (loin pain)
- Unexpected or unexplained bruising
- Jaundice (yellow colour of the white of your eyes or your skin)

In the rare event of an emergency (i.e. a life threatening problem, for example difficulty with breathing), call 999 for an ambulance and bring this leaflet into hospital with you.

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 or transfusion practitioner before you go home or your GP once you have been discharged.

This section to be completed on discharge by staff

Explain to the patient how to obtain assistance in the event of a problem and then give this leaflet to the patient before they leave the ward/clinic.

Ward/Dept:

Date of discharge:

Signature:

Enhancing your recovery after a blood transfusion

Whilst in hospital you would have been given a transfusion to replace parts of the blood which you were deficient. It is really important that following a transfusion you take steps to ensure that your own body can begin to make up these deficiencies without the need for further intervention.

You can help to ensure that your body is able to make enough red blood cells by eating a diet which contains iron. Iron is very important because it helps your body to make haemoglobin, which is a protein within red cells. Haemoglobin carries oxygen around your body, when haemoglobin levels are low you can feel very tired, weak and short of breath so keeping haemoglobin at normal levels will help you feel much better during your recovery.

How to make sure you have a diet containing iron

You can usually get enough iron from a balanced diet as it is found in a variety of food. In the UK the major sources of iron in our diet are cereal and cereal products, meat, meat based foods and vegetables. Examples of foods which are a good source of iron include:

- Lean red meat
- Turkey and chicken
- Liver (not recommended in pregnancy)
- Fish, particularly oily fish which can be frozen or canned e.g. mackerel, sardines and pilchards.
- Eggs, breakfast cereals
- Pulses and beans e.g. canned baked beans, chickpeas and lentils.
- Nuts (including peanut butter)
- Brown rice
- Tofu
- Bread, especially wholemeal or brown bread
- Leafy green vegetables, especially curly kale, watercress and broccoli
- Dried fruit, in particular apricots, raisins and prunes

Vitamin C (sometimes called ascorbic acid) may help the body to absorb iron, so to get the most from the foods you eat have vitamin C rich foods with your meals e.g. fresh vegetables, fruit or a glass of fresh orange juice.

What if I am a vegetarian or vegan?

Although iron from non-meat sources is more difficult for the body to absorb, people following a well balanced diet without meat should still be able to get enough iron in their diet.

If you have any particular concerns please discuss these with your GP.

Do I need to take iron tablets?

Most people should be able to get all the iron they need from eating a varied and balanced diet and should not need to take iron supplements or iron tablets.

However, if you are feeling particularly tired or breathless your GP may decide to check your haemoglobin levels and if necessary prescribe iron supplements or tablets.

Author ID: Transfusion Practitioner
Department: Pathology
Printed: January 2015
Review due: January 2018
Version: 1
Leaflet number: PI 130

Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Papworth Everard, Cambridge CB23 3RE
Tel: 01480 830541 Fax: 01480 831315

For more information about Papworth Hospital please visit our website www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk