Refusal of blood transfusion
Information for women in pregnancy who decline blood and blood products

Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered
This patient information leaflet tells you about your right to refuse a transfusion of blood or blood products as part of your treatment.

**Can anyone refuse a blood transfusion?**

Yes. We want to be sure that we treat every woman in a way which recognises her individual choices or religious beliefs.

Before giving anyone a blood transfusion the risks and benefits of having or not having blood or blood products will be discussed. It is up to you to decide if you are willing to accept these risks.

North Bristol NHS Trust has an active programme to reduce blood loss and reduce the number of blood transfusions given to all women.

**What if I am thinking of becoming pregnant?**

You may wish to talk to a doctor before you conceive to think about how you will be looked after in pregnancy and how you can become as fit as possible before becoming pregnant. Your General Practitioner (GP) can arrange an appointment for you to see a hospital specialist (obstetrician) to discuss this further.

**What if I am pregnant?**

When you think you are pregnant you should make your GP and midwife aware of your request for no transfusions of blood or blood products to be used as part of your care.

If you choose not to receive blood, we would strongly recommend that you have your baby in the consultant unit at Southmead Hospital Bristol, rather than at home or in a birth suite (co-located to hospital or free standing). Your midwife or GP will refer you to a consultant ante natal clinic in the early stage of your pregnancy care. You should tell the midwife and obstetrician that you do not want to have a blood transfusion or blood products.

**Please do this in writing and ask for it to be included in your maternity hand held notes and medical notes.**

If you are one of Jehovah’s Witnesses you will probably have an ‘Advance Decision to Refuse Specialist Medical Treatment’ (sometimes known as a ‘no blood form’) which tells us of your
wishes about treatments. Let your midwife and obstetrician see this and give a copy to them. Your local ministers will be able to provide you with this document.

Plan of care for your pregnancy

You will be seen in a consultant ante-natal clinic where the following will be covered:

- Iron and folic acid supplementation throughout your pregnancy.
- Regular blood tests to check your haemoglobin (blood count) is above 12g/dl. If your haemoglobin remains low despite taking supplements and you also have low iron stores you may be given a infusion(s) of ‘liquid iron’ into a vein.
- As with all women, you will have a detailed scan which will check the position of the afterbirth (placenta) to make sure it is not low-lying.
- Your maternity hand held notes and medical notes will record that you do not want blood and blood products. You will be asked to sign a consent form.
- A copy of your Care Plan “Management of women who decline blood or blood products in Obstetrics” will be filed in your maternity hand held notes and medical notes.
- You will be asked what treatments and procedures you are willing to accept and these will be recorded on the “Checklist for Blood /Blood Product Acceptance” in your maternity hand held notes and medical notes.
- If it is felt that you are at particular risk, for instance, if your placenta is low-lying the use of blood salvage techniques will be discussed.
- We will notify the anaesthetic department that you are pregnant and the expected date your baby is due.
- If your blood group is Rhesus negative we will recommend that you have Anti-D injections during your pregnancy and after delivery if needed (if your baby’s blood group was Rhesus positive).
Anti-D is a protein which is obtained from blood plasma. There is no non-blood derived alternative. If you are a Jehovah's Witness you may wish to discuss this with one of your local ministers or a member of the Hospital Liaison Committee.

Experienced staff will be available if your baby needs to be delivered by caesarean section or if there is heavy bleeding following the delivery of your baby.

What happens in labour and following the birth?

When you come into hospital in labour the consultant obstetrician and anaesthetist on call will be notified. You will be cared for as normal in labour but we would recommend that you have an injection to help with the delivery of your placenta (active management of the 3rd stage). If there are any extra risk factors we would suggest that you have an intravenous infusion (‘drip’) or a cannula inserted into a vein so a ‘drip’ can be started or drugs administered quickly if necessary.

You may choose to bring with you and wear a “No Blood” wristband.

If there are any complications senior members of the maternity team will be available and your care plan will be followed.

At all times, even if an emergency arises, we will respect your wishes. You can be confident that you will receive the best possible care and treatment during your stay in the maternity unit.

To help us respect your wishes you should:

- Have informed us in writing and asked that this is kept in your maternity hand held and medical notes.
- Carry an ‘Advance Decision form’ and ‘Care Plan’ with you at all times (in case you are unconscious and we cannot identify you).
- Before any operation you will be asked to sign an additional consent form.
- New consent forms approved by the NHS, have been specially designed to take account of individual needs.
You will be consenting only to treatment you are willing to accept and which you have discussed with your obstetrician. If a consent form for refusal of blood or blood products has not already been signed and is in your notes, you will be asked to sign this when you come into the maternity unit.

What if I have other concerns?

If you have questions that are not answered in this leaflet or are worried about any aspects of your pregnancy and the birth of your baby, please talk to a midwife or doctor.

For Jehovah’s Witnesses further help is available from

- Your local minister.
- Local Jehovah’s Witnesses Patient support Group.

Bristol Hospital Liaison Committee for Jehovah’s Witnesses. Contact details for this can be found in the North Bristol NHS Trust maternity guideline, which can be provided by your midwife or obstetrician. Alternatively, you can make contact by email: info@bristol-hlc.org.uk

References


North Bristol NHS Trust Maternity Guideline; Management of women who decline blood or blood products in obstetrics. December 2009

Cell Salvage—North Bristol NHS leaflet

Acknowledgement

Based on a leaflet devised by Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities. Available at www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution
How to contact us:

Southmead Hospital Bristol
0117 950 5050

Assessment Unit
Southmead Hospital Bristol
0117 414 6906

Central Delivery Suite
Southmead Hospital Bristol
0117 414 6916 / 0117 414 6917

Cossham Birth Centre
0117 340 8460

Day Assessment Unit
St Michael’s Hospital, Bristol
0117 928 5395

Delivery Suite
St Michael’s Hospital, Bristol
0117 928 5214

Day Assessment Unit
Royal United Hospital, Bath
01225 824 447
or 01225 824 847

www.nbt.nhs.uk/maternity

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.