

## be vocal

– what's your view?

Hearing about your experience of St Elizabeth Hospice can help us to improve our services and provide better care and support for those who need it.

To make a comment or complaint, or to compliment us on something we've done well, please write to us or visit [www.stelizabethhospice.org.uk](http://www.stelizabethhospice.org.uk)

## be connected

– how to get in touch

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- **St Elizabeth Hospice**  
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- **All Hallows Hospital**  
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Hospice

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## Blood transfusion

be informed

## Why would I need a **blood transfusion**?

**A blood transfusion will be offered to you if you are suffering from the symptoms of anaemia (a reduction of red blood cells in the blood). Anaemia can be caused by cancer or its treatment, chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Common symptoms are breathlessness, lack of energy and feeling tired.**

A blood transfusion gives your body extra blood cells which increases the uptake of oxygen from your lungs. Following your transfusion you should feel less breathless and tired. These benefits may take a few days to be experienced.

## How is it **given**?

The blood is given through a cannula inserted into a vein, usually in your arm or hand. One bag of blood (a unit) usually takes about two hours to transfuse. Each bag contains approximately 300ml of blood (or half a pint).

Before the transfusion a blood sample will be taken to determine your blood group. This is to ensure you are given blood which is compatible with your own.

The nursing staff will make careful identification checks before any transfusion is given, asking you to state your full name and date of birth.

## Is there any **risk of infection** from a blood transfusion?

Every donation of blood is individually tested to rule out any infection, any blood which fails the test is discarded. The testing process is regularly monitored to ensure the highest standards are maintained.

The objective of the tests is to detect infections known to be carried by blood. The most important of these are Hepatitis B and C, and HIV – the virus that causes AIDS. The risk of a blood transfusion being infected is now very low .

## What are the **possible side effects**?

This is where blood groups are important, as incompatibilities between blood groups can cause an adverse reaction. There are many blood groups, which differ from person to person, and the blood used in a transfusion must be of a compatible group.

A sample of your blood is taken before a transfusion so that donor blood can be matched to your blood. This greatly reduces the chance of any reaction, but the risk of reaction is not removed completely. Providing the matching process is carried out properly, and care is taken to make sure each patient receives the blood matched for them, severe reactions are very rare.

Throughout the transfusion your temperature, pulse and blood pressure will be checked by nursing staff in order to detect any reaction. Most people feel no different at all during their transfusion. However in some cases you can develop a slight fever, chills or a rash. These are usually due to a mild immune reaction or allergy and easily treated with paracetamol or slowing the rate of the transfusion.

If you feel unwell in any way inform the nursing staff. Most reactions occur in the first 15 minutes of a transfusion.

If you have a mild or moderate reaction, we will be able to treat this at the Hospice but for severe reactions you may need admission to Hospital. These are very rare.

Please discuss any worries or questions you have concerning blood transfusion with clinic staff.

**You can obtain further information from the following organisations:**

**The National Blood Service**  
website: [www.blood.co.uk](http://www.blood.co.uk)

**British Blood Transfusion Society**  
website: [www.bbts.org.uk](http://www.bbts.org.uk)