

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS REGARDING TRANSFUSION OF BLOOD OR BLOOD PRODUCTS

Transfusion of blood and blood products has many therapeutic benefits, including promotion of recovery and preservation of life. Transfusion support is considered essential for many surgeries and many types of chemotherapy.

Every possible precaution is taken in choosing donors and in matching donor and patient blood type for transfusion. However, occasional reactions to transfusion may occur. For reactions, such as fevers, hives, and other allergic reactions, the estimated risk is less than 1 in 100. For more serious reactions such as bleeding, sudden decreased blood pressure, kidney failure, or death, the estimated risk is less than 1 in 10,000.

Rigorous screening is performed for various infectious agents such as HIV (the AIDS virus) and hepatitis viruses. Recent reports indicate that the risk of getting HIV from a transfusion has been recently estimated to be less than 1 in 490,000 per unit of blood transfused. The risk of getting hepatitis has been recently estimated to be less than 1 in 60,000 per unit of blood transfused for HBV and 1 in 100,000 for HCV*. It is, also possible that other infectious agents, for which there are no currently available tests, might be transmitted through blood products.

This should provide the necessary information for deciding whether or not receive a transfusion of blood and/or blood products. If you do not wish to have a blood transfusion, alternative methods of treatment and the attendant risks must be discussed with your physician.

* Schreiber GB, Busch MP, Kleinman SH, Korelitz JJ. The risk of transfusion-transmitted viral infections. *The New England Journal of Medicine*. 1996;33:1685-1690.