

IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING BLOOD TRANSFUSION

The National Blood Transfusion Committee of the Australian Red Cross has recommended that the following warnings and information regarding blood transfusion are brought to the attention of Medical Practitioners using pathology request forms to order blood.

WARNING The risk of transmitting infectious agents is present. Careful donor selection and available laboratory tests do not completely eliminate the hazard.

Also septic and toxic reactions can result from transfusions of bacterially contaminated blood and components. Such reactions are rare, but may be life-threatening. In addition, blood components may contain certain immunizing substances other than those indicated on the label. For example, platelet concentrates contain red blood cells and white blood cells as well as platelets. Attention to the specific indications for blood components is needed to avoid inappropriate transfusion. Autologous transfusion techniques (such as intraoperative salvage and presurgical deposit) should be considered whenever feasible in the perioperative setting to reduce the risks of disease transmission and immune reactions from homologous donations.

*Principal Side Effects and Hazards
of Fresh Blood Components are, in summary*

1. Haemolytic transfusion reactions
2. Transmission of infectious diseases
3. Bacterial contamination of blood and components
4. Alloimmunization of the recipient
5. Graft-vs-host disease (GVHD)
6. Febrile reactions
7. Allergic reactions
8. Circulatory overload reactions
9. Iron overload
10. Clinically significant depletion of coagulation proteins and platelets is a complication of massive transfusion.
11. Microaggregates consisting of fibrin, white cells and platelets may develop during storage of blood.
12. Metabolic complications of transfusions can occur when very large amounts of blood are transfused including:
 - Hypothermia
 - Citrate toxicity
 - Acidosis
 - Alterations in potassiumhypokalemia or hyperkalemia

More detailed information will be found in the Circular of Information published by the National Blood Transfusion Committee of the Australian Red Cross (May 1994). Copies of this circular may be obtained from the Australian Red Cross.