

Delayed Reactions

During a blood or blood product transfusion you are carefully monitored by staff, educated to identify any sudden reaction during the transfusion.

Reactions are rare; however a delayed reaction is possible which can develop 24 hours later, or even up to weeks after a transfusion.

Most patients don't experience any negative effects, and a delayed reaction may often be unrecognised. Signs and symptoms of a delayed reaction may occur when your body has developed antibodies that were too low to be detected in pre transfusion testing, but have intensified as a result of the current transfusion. These antibodies can develop as a result of pregnancy or previous transfusion.

(Antibodies: cells of the immune system that attack foreign substances).

Signs and Symptoms of a Delayed Reaction

Please note symptoms may present in any order.

- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or white of the eye)
- Hives, rash or itching
- Fever with chills or shaking
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Low blood pressure
- Dizziness or fainting
- Headaches, double vision, seizures
- Fatigue and weakness
- Decrease in urine output
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising (nose bleeds, blood in urine, visible blood or a recent change to black colour of faeces)

What you should do

If you experience any of the delayed symptoms listed in the days following a blood or blood product transfusion, which cannot be explained by your medical condition, it is worthwhile to bring them to the attention of your doctor.

You should notify either your:

- Healthcare professional (GP, Aboriginal Medical Service)
- Treating specialist
- Treating hospital where you received the transfusion

Alternatively:

- Present to your nearest Emergency Department

Future Management

If your doctor suspects that you have had a delayed reaction to a blood transfusion, it is important that the pathology service that provided the transfusion is notified.

This allows for prompt investigation and further screening of your blood to ensure that additional problems are avoided if another transfusion ever becomes necessary.

What you can do:

Discuss the management of any future blood transfusions with your doctor.

Always give complete health information to health care providers. You may need to carry an ID card with your current health information.

Discuss with your doctor if an ID bracelet is necessary for you.

Resources

Patients receiving blood transfusions can access further information from the following resources:

Australian Red Cross Blood Service

www.mytransfusion.com.au

Various factsheets about transfusion can be found under the 'Resources' tab.

National Blood Authority

www.blood.gov.au

Click on 'For Patients' box. Look for 'Quick links to the latest information for patients' heading. Click on 'Making Patient Blood Management Decisions'

Clinical Excellence Commission

www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au

Click on 'Resources' tab to find *Blood Transfusion – Patient Information* leaflets, available in 13 languages.

Disclaimer:

This information brochure is based on the Northern NSW Local Health District's 'Blood Transfusion – Delayed Reaction after transfusion of Blood or Blood Products' brochure published March 2015.

