

# ADMINISTRATION OF BLOOD OR BLOOD PRODUCTS

SAINT BARNABAS MEDICAL CENTER  
NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT

## **Why does my NICU baby need a blood transfusion?**

Transfusion with blood or blood products is one of the many forms of treatment which may be needed by babies who require admission to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). It is estimated that almost all infants born at less than 28 weeks gestation will receive at least one red blood cell transfusion during their hospitalization, with 80% needing more than one transfusion.

Several different types of blood products may be needed by a baby during his or her hospitalization. These include red blood cells, which carry oxygen to the baby's tissues; platelets, which help the blood to clot; plasma which contains protein and has various factors that help the blood to clot; and cryoprecipitate, a plasma-product rich in certain blood clotting factors.

## **Are blood transfusions safe for my baby?**

Although the most up-to-date screening methods are used to ensure donated blood is safe, transfusions can potentially transmit various types of infections, or be complicated by reactions to various substances in the blood. Some rare, but possible, complications from transfusion include HIV- 1&2 (potential risk: 1 in 1,900,000. HTLV-I&II risk: 1 in 640,000), Hepatitis A (potential risk: 1 in 1,000,000), Hepatitis B (potential risk: 1 in 63,000), Hepatitis C (potential risk: 1 in 1,600,000), transfusion reactions, and other more rare infections. (reference- AABB 14<sup>th</sup> edition 2003 technical manual).

The decision to transfuse is made according to each individual baby's situation. The neonatologists in our Neonatal Intensive Care unit are committed to minimizing the need for blood transfusions. They carefully weigh the risks against the benefits for each baby prior to deciding that a transfusion is necessary. In addition, the neonatologists help reduce the need for transfusions by minimizing the amount of blood drawn from your baby for testing.

## **Will I know if my baby is going to get a transfusion?**

Your consent is required prior to transfusion of blood or blood products and is **valid for your baby's entire NICU stay**.

## **What is Direct Donor Blood?**

Fathers and persons the parent(s) select may donate blood specifically for their baby; this is called a directed donor. Because of the normal blood loss during delivery, newly delivered mothers can not donate blood due to the risk to their own health. The directed donor must have a blood type, which is compatible with the baby.

## **How is blood donated to a particular baby?**

1. You must get a prescription from the neonatologist. Only have 1 person donate blood at a time.
2. Once you have the prescription from the neonatologist, please call the Community Blood Center to make an appointment to donate blood.
3. You can make an appointment at the Community Blood Center by calling (201-444-3900, ext. 1407). They have three locations in the area: Montvale, Paramus, and Lincoln Park, NJ.
4. All blood donations and testing of the blood is done at the Community Blood Centers.

5. The blood is tested to see if it is compatible with your baby. If so, it is sent to the hospital's blood bank and the blood bank then notifies the NICU that direct donor blood is available when needed for your baby.
6. If the blood is not compatible, the neonatologist will need to write another prescription for the next person to donate direct donor blood. If more than 1 person donates at the same time and the blood is all compatible, some of the blood would be wasted because it would expire before it could be used by your baby.
7. It takes a minimum of 3 working days for direct donor blood to be available for your baby.
8. The donated blood is good for about 35-42 days.
9. Once someone donates blood, they cannot donate again for 56 days. A woman that has just delivered a baby usually cannot donate blood for about 6 weeks after delivery.
10. If your baby can't use the blood donated from a direct donor or if your baby needs blood before the direct donor blood is available, your baby will receive blood bank blood that has been tested for such things as HIV and Hepatitis.

**If you have any further questions, please ask your nurse or doctor.**