

# Looking after yourself if you are having blood transfusions.

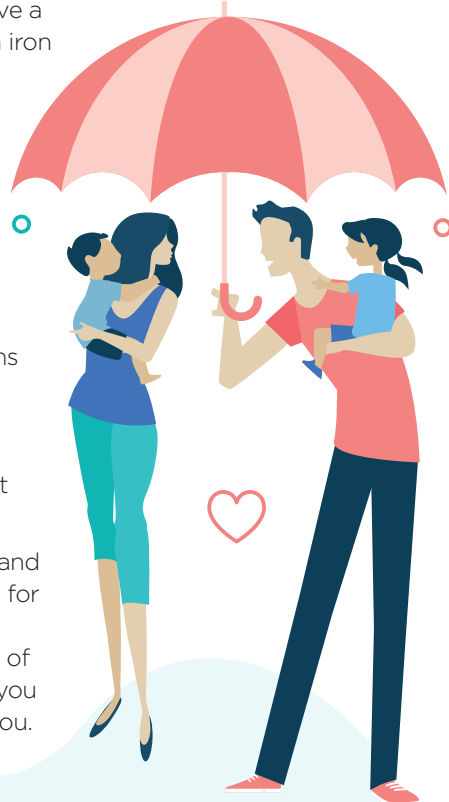
**Blood transfusions keep us well and help us lead our normal lives. Red blood cells contain iron which helps the blood carry oxygen around our body. If we have regular transfusions we have to be very careful on how much iron is in our body as this is not good for us. There are many things we can do to make sure the iron is under control.**

Regular monitoring is essential and this will be done at your local hospital or specialist centre. This will include different scans and blood tests. The scans should happen every year and will be on your liver and maybe your heart as this is where the iron will live. It is really important that you have your scans so the doctors and nurses can see what is happening to you. The blood tests will be more frequent than the scans and will give a good picture into your body and how much iron you have.

You may be asked to have a liver biopsy to see if there is any damage to your liver. This will be done in a hospital and you will be asked to stay overnight. Your grown up will be able to stay with you if needed.

You will need to take some medicine called chelation if you are having blood transfusions over a long time. The chelation is either a tablet or an injection using a pump so the medicine can be given to you over a longer time. This can sometimes feel a bit scary but once you get used to it you should be ok.

You may find that having a needle in your hand to have the blood transfusions is too painful for you. There are many ways the doctors and nurses can help you with this. Having a port of other permanent line may be an option for you and make the transfusion a little easier for you.



This literature has been designed by **DBAUK** with kind support and guidance from the **Aplastic Anaemia Trust**. Check out [www.theaat.org.uk/marrowkidz](http://www.theaat.org.uk/marrowkidz) for further info

[www.diamondblackfan.org.uk](http://www.diamondblackfan.org.uk)  
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## Blood transfusions

Why you might need them, and what happens when you have one

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If you have DBA, you might be given a blood transfusion to help make you feel better.

In DBA, the bone marrow inside your bones doesn't make enough of red blood cells your body needs to keep you healthy. A transfusion is when blood from a kind person (a 'donor') is given to you. It's a very safe thing to happen, and it can make you feel much better, so that you can live your life and do the things you love.



## What will happen when I have my transfusion?

**Your transfusion will probably happen in a hospital, but you shouldn't need to stay in at bedtime and sleep there. Usually, you'll be able to go home soon after the transfusion has finished.**

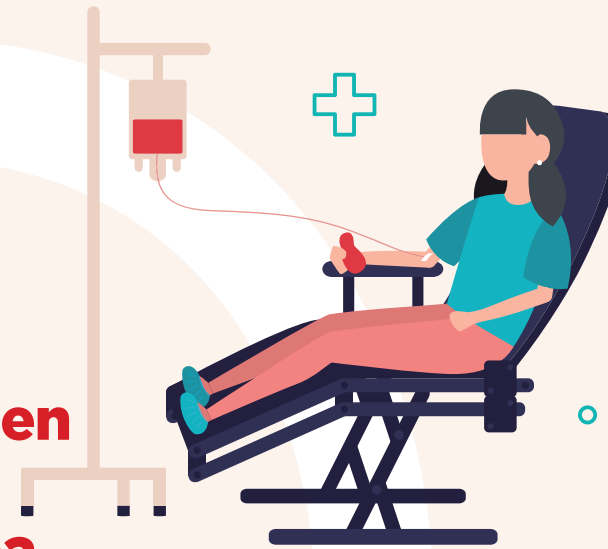
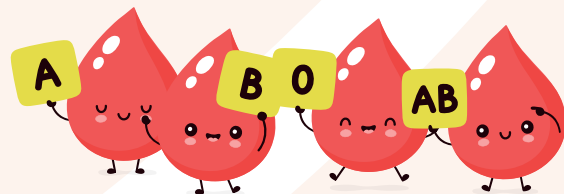
A tiny bit of your blood, called a sample, will be taken with an injection.

This is to check your blood group. Blood might all look the same, but it's actually split into different groups: A, B, AB or O. You can only be given blood that is safe for your group. Your doctors have done this lots of times and they know exactly which blood is and isn't OK for your body.

Before you receive blood, doctors will make sure that it is very safe.

This donated blood is stored in special plastic bags. To give the transfusion, these bags are connected to a long plastic tube. This is connected to a thin plastic tube called a cannula, which has a needle in the end. The needle is popped into the back of your hand. Just like with any injection, you might feel a quick sharp prick, but once the needle is in, it shouldn't hurt at all.

You will need to sit or lie quite still while the blood is being given to you. Somebody will stay with you and you can take things in, for example a book or a tablet, to help you pass the time.



## How much blood should I have?

**Your nurses will carefully work out how much blood you need to have and this is usually based on your age, your weight and how much you need.**

Blood transfusions are kept to a minimum of 12 months of age with the aim to keep the blood level greater than 90g/L.

Most people have blood transfusions monthly but sometimes this may change to every 3 weeks. It is important to remember that we are all different our transfusion dates and times may change.



## How will this make me feel?

**You should feel fine while the transfusion is happening, but if you begin to feel poorly, it's really important that you tell a grown-up.**

It is also important to let someone know if you feel unwell any time after your transfusion, so that they can get you any help you might need.

If you had the transfusion in the back of your hand, your hand or arm might be sore or be a bit bruised for a few days after the transfusion. This might be worrying for you, but this is completely normal and it will stop soon.

A transfusion is very safe, but we understand that you might feel worried or have some questions about what is going to happen. If there's anything you're not sure about, always speak to a member of your family or your doctor about this. They can help you or find the right person to answer your questions.

