

Blood Transfusion in a Newborn

What is it?

A blood transfusion is a procedure to put blood from a donor into your baby's body through the veins. Sometimes only certain parts of the donor's blood are used, for example red or white blood cells, plasma, or platelets.

The donor blood comes from a blood bank. This blood is tested to make sure it's correct for your baby. It's also tested for hepatitis, HIV, and other diseases carried in the blood. Only blood that has passed these and other screening tests can be used for transfusion.

Why does my baby need it?

A blood transfusion is done for many different reasons. In newborns, transfusions are often necessary to treat severe **anemia**. A baby with anemia doesn't have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen throughout the body.

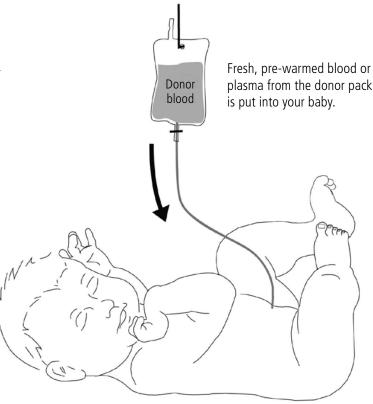
Since newborns don't make their own blood until they're a few weeks old, a blood transfusion can boost the oxygen-carrying capacity of their blood and ease the stress on their heart and other organs.

How is a blood transfusion done?

Blood is given to your baby through an IV (intravenous) line.

To place the IV, a doctor or nurse puts a small catheter (tube) through your baby's skin and into vein. The vein could be in your baby's arm, leg, head, or umbilicus ("belly button"). Once the catheter is in place, donor blood is slowly put through it, into your baby's body. Usually only a small amount of blood is given — perhaps just a few tablespoons.

The transfusion usually takes 1 to 3 hours.



(continued on back)

Talking with your doctor about this treatment

The following table lists the most common potential benefits, risks, and alternatives for this treatment. Other benefits and risks may apply in your child's unique medical situation. The conversation you have with your child's healthcare provider is the most important part of learning about these risks and benefits. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's important to have all your questions before you agree to a recommended treatment.

Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
Blood transfusion can ease or eliminate a variety of medical conditions. Your baby's doctor will explain the benefits of transfusion for your baby. In some cases, blood transfusion is life-saving.	 Too much fluid in the body. This can usually be prevented by transfusing the blood slowly. Allergic reaction to the donated blood. Symptoms include fever, rash, changes in blood pressure, and difficulties in breathing. Severe reactions are rare. Hemolytic reaction, which happens if the wrong blood is given. This can be life-threatening. Infection either from bacteria introduced through the IV, or from an undetected virus in the donor's blood. 	Alternatives depend on the reason a transfusion is needed. In some cases, there is no alternative treatment to blood transfusion. In other cases, drugs can be given to stimulate blood cell growth, or reduce bleeding.