

## Declining Blood Products or a Blood Transfusion in Pregnancy or After Childbirth

### Introduction:

This leaflet has been written for pregnant women who know they want to decline a blood transfusion.

For more detailed information about blood transfusions please see the leaflets produced by the National Blood Service ([www.blood.co.uk](http://www.blood.co.uk))

### Telling your Midwife or Doctor:

You may choose to decline treatment with blood or blood products but it is important that you tell your midwife or doctor as soon as possible, either at booking or during early pregnancy. This will allow enough time to discuss the potential implications in a relaxed and unhurried environment.

Following discussion with your midwife or doctor you will be asked to sign a consent form which states that you do not wish to receive a blood transfusion and this will be kept in your maternity notes. If you have a written Living will / Health-care advanced directive which states that you do not wish to receive a blood transfusion or any blood products you must give a signed copy of this to your midwife or doctor to be kept in your maternity notes.

### Minimising the need for a blood transfusion:

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists have developed a guideline on transfusion ([www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk)) in obstetrics and when your midwife or doctor are discussing your care they may be guided by this guideline.

You may be able to reduce the chance of needing a transfusion by ensuring that you are not anaemic (low iron levels) during pregnancy. You will be offered regular blood tests to check your iron levels and if they are low you will be offered tablets to increase your iron levels.

To minimise the chance of heavy bleeding during delivery you are advised to opt for “active management” to deliver your placenta (afterbirth). Your midwife or doctor will discuss this in more detail with you.

### Having your baby:

The care you receive during labour will not be affected by your decision to decline a blood transfusion.

To ensure that any problems with bleeding are dealt with promptly you are advised to give birth in the consultant led unit at the hospital, rather than a homebirth.

If you require a caesarean section (either planned or emergency) you are advised to have an epidural (regional anaesthetic) to minimise any risks during surgery.

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Senior medical staff will also be available during surgery to identify and manage problems quickly.

## **If you need a blood transfusion:**

If your doctor feels that you need a blood transfusion to treat severe bleeding or anaemia they will discuss the reasons with you in detail to allow you to make an informed decision.

Should the situation worsen without treatment with blood products your doctor will discuss this with you in detail to ensure that you are aware of the possible consequences. Your choices will be respected if you still wish to decline a blood transfusion, even when the outcome may be very grave.

## **Changing your mind:**

You can change your mind at any time and choose to receive a blood transfusion. This choice will also be respected and documented in your maternity notes.

## **Further questions:**

If you have any questions about blood transfusions and refusing blood transfusions please speak to your midwife or doctor.

## **Acknowledgement:**

This leaflet has been seen and approved by members of the Labour Ward Forum.

