

**Information for women who
choose to refuse blood and
blood products during pregnancy**



Obstetrics & Gynaecology

patientinformation

This leaflet has been written for pregnant women who know they will want to decline a blood transfusion or blood product during their pregnancy or in childbirth.

Can anyone refuse a blood transfusion?

Yes. Our aim is to treat every woman in a way that recognises and respects her individual choices, religious, cultural and personal beliefs.

Before giving you a blood transfusion or blood product, the risks and benefits of having or not having them will be discussed fully with you. It is then up to you to decide if you are willing to accept treatment or not.

The care you receive during your pregnancy and childbirth will not be affected by your decision to decline a blood transfusion or blood products.

What if I am thinking of becoming pregnant?

You may wish to talk to your doctor or midwife before you become pregnant, to discuss how you can become as fit and healthy as possible, and how you will be looked after during your pregnancy and childbirth.

Your General Practitioner (GP) or midwife can arrange an appointment for you to see a hospital specialist (obstetrician) to discuss this further if you wish.

What if I am pregnant?

When you think you are pregnant, you must make sure that your doctor and midwife are aware of your request for no blood or blood products to be used as part of your care.

When you have your booking appointment with your midwife (your first main appointment) you will be asked about all aspects of your general health, previous pregnancies, including your religious beliefs and if you have any objections to receiving a blood transfusion or blood products like the Anti D injection if your blood group is Rhesus Negative.

If you choose not to receive blood, we will advise that you have your baby in hospital rather than at home. Your midwife will refer you for care at the hospital under a consultant obstetrician, who will discuss your pregnancy and make a plan of care with you that will be recorded in your hospital and hand held maternity record. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you wish to decline blood and blood products.

If you are one of Jehovah's Witnesses you will require the form **'Advanced Decision to Refuse Specific Medical Treatment'** and a copy of the **'Care Plan for Women in Labour Refusing a Blood Transfusion'**, which tells us of your wishes about treatment.

You will need to sign the 'Advanced Decision Form' in the presence of 2 witnesses and a copy will be kept in both your hospital and hand held maternity records (your local ministers should be able to provide you with this document).

What will be the plan of care for my pregnancy and labour?

During the antenatal part of your pregnancy you will be seen at regular intervals by both your local midwife and the doctor at the hospital antenatal clinic (Greenoaks). You may also be invited to talk with the anaesthetist as well.

When you see the doctor, a plan of care will be made and you will be advised:

- To take Iron and Folic Acid supplements (tablets or liquid medicine) throughout your pregnancy to maximize your iron stores.
- To have monthly blood tests to check your blood count (iron levels) and if they are low you will be offered tablets (or liquid if you prefer), if you are not taking them already, to increase your iron levels.
- You will be offered a booking scan at around 12 weeks of pregnancy and a detailed scan at around 20 weeks, the same as other pregnant women. At the 20 week scan we will check the position of your placenta (after birth) to make sure it is not low lying in the womb (uterus) which can increase your risk of bleeding. If your placenta is low lying then you will have further scans in your pregnancy.

Refusal of blood products during pregnancy

- A discussion will take place and be documented in your notes about your wishes for labour and delivery. We will also discuss what facilities and treatments we can offer if you were to have heavier than normal bleeding (haemorrhage), so that you can decide whether to deliver here in Rotherham or at another maternity unit. If you are one of Jehovah's witnesses this will be indicated on your 'Advanced Decision Form' and 'Care Plan for Women Refusing Blood'.
- If your blood group is Rhesus Negative, we recommend an injection of Anti D at around 28 weeks of pregnancy and after the birth of your baby (if your baby is found to be Rhesus Positive). Anti D is a protein that is obtained from blood plasma. There is no non blood derived alternative. If you wish to decline Anti D it will be clearly documented in your hospital and hand held maternity records. We will be happy to discuss any concerns you have regarding Anti D.
- If you are declining because you are one of Jehovah's Witnesses you may wish to discuss this further with your minister, or a member of your hospital liaison committee. Your wishes will be respected. Please ask the midwife or doctor for the Antenatal prophylaxis with anti-D patient information leaflet for more details.
- When you are admitted in labour, we will inform the consultant obstetrician and anaesthetist on call so that they are aware of your admission and your request to decline blood and blood products.

Refusal of blood products during pregnancy

- The care you receive during labour will be managed in the same way as any other person. You will be entitled to the usual choices for pain relief unless there are any other contraindications.
- You will be given a drug called syntocinon in the form of an injection into your leg as your baby is born. This speeds up the process of delivery of the afterbirth and is known to decrease the amount of blood lost in comparison to not having the drug and waiting for the afterbirth to deliver naturally. Sometimes we also start a drip into your arm with a drug called syntocinon to further help your womb contract and stop bleeding (neither of these drugs contain blood products).
- If you need a caesarean section (elective or emergency) this should be carried out by a consultant obstetrician. However, if a caesarean section is needed urgently, the specialist doctor on the labour ward will start the surgery, but the consultant will be advised straight away and will attend in case any problems arise. Senior midwives and doctors are available at all times on the labour ward to identify and manage problems quickly.
- You will be advised by the anaesthetist to have a regional anaesthetic (spinal or epidural) if you do not already have one.
- Before any operation you will be asked to sign an additional consent form. You will be consenting only to treatment you are willing to accept, that you have already discussed with the obstetrician.

Refusal of blood products during pregnancy

- You will be kept fully informed of any problems if they arise.
- Trust guidelines and policies are in place to manage women who bleed more than usual should you choose to decline blood and blood products.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You can change your mind at any time and choose to receive a blood transfusion or blood product. This choice will be respected and documented in your records.

What if a blood transfusion is recommended by the doctor?

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

Should your situation worsen without treatment of blood and blood products, the senior doctor will talk to you and your relatives in detail, to make sure you are aware of the possible consequences.

At all times, even if an emergency arises' we will respect your wishes. You can be confident that you will receive the best possible care and treatment during your time in Rotherham maternity unit.

What if I have any other concerns?

If you have any further questions that may not have been answered in this leaflet or are worried about any aspects of your pregnancy and delivery, please talk to your midwife or doctor.

You can also speak to a supervisor of midwives at the hospital whose role it is to support and advise women, their families and staff. She can be contacted via the labour ward or antenatal clinic.

For members of Jehovah's Witnesses faith further help can be sought from your local minister or Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC).

Additional sources of information

- For detailed information about blood transfusions please see the information produced by the National Blood Transfusion Service 'will I need a blood transfusion?' at **www.blood.co.uk**
- Antenatal prophylaxis with anti-D patient information leaflet. ZLB Behring UK Ltd.
- Iron in your diet. NHS patient information leaflet. Produced by Teresa Walker (Lead Midwife, Labour Ward) February 2010

Thank you

Thank you to Michael Cosgrove at the Hospital Liaison Committee for Jehovah's Witnesses for his advice and support in developing this information leaflet for women who are pregnant and accessing maternity care at Rotherham.

How to contact us

Greenoaks Antenatal Clinic

Telephone 01709 424347

Labour Ward

Telephone 01709 424491

(Supervisor of midwives can be contacted via the labour ward or antenatal clinic)

Your local midwife and GP contact details will be on your hand held maternity records

Hospital Liaison Committee for Jehovah's Witnesses

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David Gidlow

Telephone 01246 204 535 /
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Telephone 0114 247 2175 /
07952 651164

mikemurphy@sheffield-hlc.org.uk

24 Hour access via London Office
Telephone 020 89062211

Useful contact numbers

NHS 111 Service

Telephone 111

Health Info

Telephone 01709 427190

Stop Smoking Service

Telephone 01709 422444

A&E

Telephone 01709 424455

**For GP out of hours,
contact your surgery**

Useful websites

www.nhs.uk

www.gov.uk

www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk

www.blood.co.uk

We value your comments

If you have any comments or concerns about the care we have provided please let us know, or alternatively you can write to:

Patient Services

The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

Rotherham Hospital

Moorgate Road

Oakwood

Rotherham

S60 2UD

Telephone 01709 424461

Email complaints@rothgen.nhs.uk



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