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Your right to decline a blood transfusion or blood products during pregnancy and childbirth

Issued by Maternity Department

This leaflet gives information about your options if you decline a blood transfusion or blood products during your pregnancy or childbirth.

Can I decline a blood transfusion or blood products?

Anyone can decline a blood transfusion or blood products.

The decision to transfuse is only made after considering the potential benefits and risks and any alternative options.

Benefits include feeling better and less tired and it may be necessary to save your life.

One major risk would be a transfusion reaction.

A member of the medical staff will discuss the alternative options with you to enable you to make an informed choice.

The Trust respects every woman's religious and personal beliefs.

What if I'm thinking of becoming pregnant?

You may wish to talk to a healthcare professional before you plan to get pregnant. You can discuss how to get as fit as possible before you conceive. You can seek advice from your General Practitioner (GP). They may refer you to a childbirth specialist (Consultant Obstetrician) to discuss this further.

What if my blood group is Rhesus Negative?

If your blood group is Rhesus negative, please ask your midwife for the leaflet '*The Rhesus Factor and Anti-D, information for Rhesus Negative women expecting a baby.*' This explains why Anti-D is recommended in pregnancy and following the birth of your baby. This leaflet is provided by the Trust.

What will be my plan of care for my pregnancy?

During your pregnancy you will be seen by a Consultant Obstetrician in the antenatal clinic. A plan of care to reduce the risk of a haemorrhage will then be written in your notes after discussing the following:

- Regular blood checks for iron levels to ensure that you are not becoming anaemic. You will be advised on your diet and, if required, which oral iron supplement to take.
- Detailed scan to check the position of the afterbirth. If it is lying low in the womb you require a caesarean section for the birth of your baby. In this case, you will be advised to take iron supplements six weeks before the date your baby is due.
- Use of Anti-D injections if you have a Rhesus negative blood group.
- If you have any bleeding in your pregnancy to call the Delivery Suite, Wansbeck and speak to a midwife.
Telephone number: **01670 564194.**

What will be the plan for labour and after the birth?

When you come into hospital in labour you will be cared for by a midwife. The consultant obstetrician and anaesthetist will be informed of your admission.

A cannula (needle) will be placed in your hand. A blood sample will be taken to check for low iron stores (anaemia).

Following the birth of your baby, you will be advised to have active management for the delivery of the placenta (afterbirth). This involves an oxytocin (a hormone which is not a blood product) injection into your leg following your baby's birth. This speeds up the separation and delivery of your placenta and makes your womb contract. Research shows active management significantly reduces the risk of serious bleeding from the area where the placenta was attached.

You may need a hormone drip to stop your womb from bleeding following delivery. This will not be blood or blood products.

You may need stitches following the birth. The midwife or obstetrician will carry out the repair as soon as possible, to minimise your blood loss.

After the birth of your baby, your midwife will inform you how to monitor your blood loss. If you think the amount is more than expected or you pass clots, you should inform your midwife.

Complications during and following childbirth will be managed by senior members of staff.

At all times, even in the event of an emergency, your wishes will be respected.

What if I change my mind?

You will be kept fully informed at all times. If you change your mind regarding your choice to decline blood transfusion or blood products, please tell us, and we can amend your treatment plan accordingly.

What if I am currently pregnant?

Your doctor and midwife need to know of your choice as soon as possible. Your plan of care needs to respect your choice to decline blood and blood products.

Your midwife will ask at the booking interview (first main appointment with your midwife) if you agree to receive blood or blood products. This includes Anti-D (injection given if you have a Rhesus negative blood group given at specific times during pregnancy and after birth).

If you choose not to receive blood or blood products we strongly recommend you choose to deliver your baby at Wansbeck General Hospital. This is the Consultant led unit. There are treatments for haemorrhage that can be given in this unit that are unavailable at home or in a midwifery-led unit.

Your midwife or consultant will ask you to put your wishes in writing which should be signed and held in your maternity notes. If you are a Jehovah's Witness you may have an 'Advance Decision to Refuse Specific Medical Treatment' form. This tells us of your wishes. Give your midwife a copy which will be put in your hand held maternity notes.

What if I wish further information?

For further information, please contact your community midwife or ask to talk to a hospital doctor.

You may also talk to one of our transfusion practitioners.

Telephone 03 44 811 8111 Ext. 2370 or Ext. 3817

Contact numbers

Wansbeck Maternity Unit

Ashington

(01670) 564194

North Tyneside Midwifery Led Unit

North Shields

(0191) 293 4209

Hexham Midwifery Led Unit

Hexham

(01434) 655352

Hillcrest Midwifery Led Unit

Alnwick

(01665) 626732

Berwick Midwifery Led Unit

Berwick-upon-Tweed

(01289) 356622

Resources

National Blood Service

www.blood.co.uk

Saving Mothers' Lives:

Reviewing maternal deaths to make motherhood safer 2003-2005

www.cemach.org.uk

RCOG (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists)

Green top Guideline No.47

www.rcog.org.uk

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

PIN 447/V3

Review date: October 2015

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