

Patient Fact Sheet

Special Blood Requirement - Washed Blood

What is washed blood?

Red blood cells (RBCs) and platelets can be washed using special techniques to remove proteins in plasma portion of the blood that may be causing your reactions.

Why is washed blood needed?

If you have suffered repeated, severe allergic or anaphylactic reactions to blood transfusion in the past, use of washed RBCs or platelets may be a safer option for your treatment. This is rare but can be quite serious therefore, this precaution is important.

Which patients are at increased risk of severe allergic reactions?

Some patients are at particular risk of severe allergic reactions. If you are exposed to a protein that is missing from your own plasma during a blood transfusion (or during pregnancy if you are exposed to proteins in your baby's circulation) your body may form an antibody against it. Forming antibodies is normal as this is how our bodies are able to protect us from viruses and bacteria.

If you receive another transfusion, however, the antibody you formed may cause a severe allergic reaction.

Is all blood routinely washed?

No. RBC and platelet transfusions are not routinely washed and need to be washed 'on demand'. It is important that you tell your medical team if you need washed blood in order to prevent the potential of having another severe reaction.

What if blood is needed in an emergency?

In emergencies, there may not be enough time to arrange for washed blood to be provided as it may be more important to provide blood quickly. The medical team treating you will balance these risks and discuss with you.

- Please carry the attached card with you and show it to your physician or nurse if a blood transfusion is being considered.
- Consider registering with a medical alert program (such as MedicAlert®) to help first responders and emergency physicians in identifying your need for washed blood components.