

Special Blood Requirement - HLA-Matched Platelets

What is an HLA-matched platelet?

Human Leukocyte antigens (HLA) are proteins that are found on most cells in your body including platelets.

An HLA-matched platelet is a blood component from a blood donor with an HLA type very similar to your own.

What are HLA antibodies?

When exposed to HLA from another individual our body can sometimes form antibodies. Antibodies are usually formed by the body as part of its normal defense system. In this case, your body recognized a protein on the donor's (or in the case of pregnancy, your baby's) cells that was different from yours and formed an antibody against it.

What does this mean?

A platelet transfusion may be required to help prevent bleeding if your own platelet count is very low. If you need a platelet transfusion in the future, the HLA antibodies may affect the outcome of your transfusion. If you do require a platelet transfusion in the future, it is important that you tell your physician that you have an HLA antibody.

HLA-matched platelets can then be requested or collected for you so that they will provide the greatest benefit. HLA-matched platelets are irradiated to prevent a reaction called transfusion associated graft versus host disease (TA-GvHD).

What happens if I receive platelets that are not HLA-matched?

If you receive a platelet transfusion that is not HLA-matched, there is a risk that the platelets will not provide you with the greatest benefit.

It may take more time to find platelets that are a good match for you. It is important to let your physicians know about this antibody as soon as possible if a platelet transfusion is being considered for 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®) that will identify your need for HLA-matched platelets to first responders and physicians in case of emergencies.