

Patient Fact Sheet

Special Blood Requirement - Platelet or HLA Antibodies

What are platelet antibodies?

When you are exposed to platelets through a blood transfusion or pregnancy, sometimes your immune system will form an antibody. Antibodies are usually formed by the body as part of its normal defense system for example when you are exposed to bacteria or viruses to help fight infection. In this case, your body recognized a protein (also called an antigen) on the donor's platelets (or in the case of pregnancy, your baby's platelets) that was different from yours and formed an antibody against it.

Does everyone who receives a blood transfusion form an antibody?

Only a small percentage of people (about 7 out of every 100) who have been pregnant or have received a blood transfusion will form an antibody. Patients who have had many blood transfusions or multiple pregnancies may be more likely to form an antibody.

How does it affect me?

If you receive a blood transfusion that is not matched for the antibody you have, there is a risk that it will not provide the maximum benefit and may even lead to a transfusion reaction. The antibody you formed could be directed against a platelet specific antigen or an antibody to a human leukocyte antigen (HLA), it may take more time to find platelets that are a suitable match for you. It is important to let your physician know about this antibody as soon as possible if a blood transfusion is being considered for you.

If you are or if you become pregnant, and your antibody is against a platelet specific antigen, it can pass through you to your baby. Your physician will monitor you and your baby carefully throughout your pregnancy to make sure the appropriate care and treatment can be initiated as required.

- ✓ Please carry the attached card with you and show it to your physician or nurse if a blood transfusion is being considered and/or if you are pregnant.
- ✓ Consider registering with a medical alert program (such as MedicAlert® or an equivalent program) that will identify your need for platelets matched to your identified platelet antibody to first responders and physicians in case of emergencies.

