

Purpose of this procedure:

Blood transfusion is common in clinical practice. Blood transfusion is well known to be associated with adverse effects, and surveys of the use of blood in the UK indicate 20% or more of transfusions are inappropriate, and that alternatives to transfusion are underused. It is therefore essential that patients are fully informed of the benefits, risks and alternatives to transfusion, and give their consent ([Summary of SaBTO recommendations, 2021](#)).

This procedure outlines how to proceed with blood transfusion with the informed and valid consent of the recipient.

This procedure must be read in conjunction with these complementary Blood Transfusion Procedures:

- [Decision to transfuse](#)
- [Patient information and shared decision making](#)
- [Written authorisation to transfuse a blood component](#)

The Procedure:

Informed and valid consent is the process by which a patient learns about and understands the purpose, benefits, and potential risks of the transfusion. For consent to be valid, it must be voluntary, informed and given by a competent patient with capacity.

Blood transfusion: non-emergency

Informed consent for transfusion is necessary for all patients who will likely, or definitely, receive a transfusion and the checklist on the front page of the National Transfusion Record should be completed for all transfusions by the authoriser.

Although the task of gaining written and signed consent from the recipient for a blood transfusion is not a legal requirement within the UK, there is a responsibility to ensure that the patient/guardian receives adequate information regarding the transfusion and that this is clearly documented in their National Transfusion Record. This should include information pertaining to the risks and benefits of transfusion and the risks and benefits of not having a transfusion. Information relating to available alternatives to transfusion should be considered (e.g. iron supplementation).

In addition to the provision of information about the nature and purpose of the proposed treatment, an active discussion should result in shared decision making, allowing the patient to ask their own questions, and to raise any concerns that they wish to be addressed before they make a decision to receive, or refuse, the transfusion.

Verbal informed consent should be obtained and recorded in the patient's National Transfusion Record by the person making the decision to transfuse or the person authorising the transfusion. If the patient is not capable of informed consent, verbal agreement for the transfusion must be gained from the patient's legal guardian (please also refer to Blood transfusion: emergency (below))

Additionally, a record of the conversation with the patient should be documented in the patient's health record.

Patients on regular transfusion programmes

Patients on regular transfusion programmes do not require consent to be documented for every transfusion after the initial discussion but consent should be reviewed periodically. This is clarified in the 2020 SaBTO consent guidance.

Blood transfusion: emergency

Healthcare professionals may provide emergency treatment to patients without consent provided that the treatment is necessary to preserve life or to prevent a serious deterioration in the patient's condition. An exception to this may be if the patient is known to have an advance directive in place which states that they do not wish to receive donated blood components. If such an advance directive is in place the clinical team must take this into consideration in their decision making.

Patients who have a blood transfusion and who were not able to give informed and valid consent prior to the transfusion are informed of the transfusion prior to discharge and provided with relevant information (e.g. SNBTS patient information leaflet *Receiving a transfusion*).

Refusal of transfusion

Please refer to [NHS Lothian Resources for managing patients who refuse blood \(including Jehovah's Witnesses\)](#)

Associated materials/references:

[NHS Lothian Blood Transfusion Procedure: Decision to transfuse](#)

[NHS Lothian Blood Transfusion Procedure: Patient information and shared decision making](#)

[NHS Lothian Blood Transfusion Procedure: Written authorisation to transfuse a blood component](#)

[NHS Lothian Resources for managing patients who refuse blood \(including Jehovah's Witnesses\)](#)

[NHS Lothian Policy for Obtaining Consent](#)

Murphy MF, Harris A, Neuberger J and on behalf of the SaBTO Consent for Transfusion Working Group (2021) [Consent for blood transfusion: summary of recommendations from the Advisory Committee for the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs \(SaBTO\)](#) *Clinical Medicine Journal* Vol 21 No 3 pp 201-203

Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (2020) Patient consent for blood transfusion. Department of Health and Social Care, 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blood-transfusion-patient-consent>