

Virology Testing for Patients receiving Regular Blood Transfusions

We offer annual testing for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV to all patients receiving regular blood transfusions for either sickle cell disease or thalassaemia. If you consent, we will test your blood for these infections.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Why are we offering you these tests?

Any blood transfusion carries a risk of infection. All blood is now tested for hepatitis B, C and HIV.

With modern donor selection and testing, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV transmission is now very rare in the UK. The current risk of an infectious donation entering the UK blood supply is less than 1 in 1.2 million donations for hepatitis B, less than 1 in 7 million for HIV and less than 1 in 28 million for hepatitis C(1). Compared to other everyday risks the likelihood of getting an infection from a blood transfusion is very low. All blood donors are unpaid volunteers. They are very carefully selected and tested to make sure that the blood they donate is as safe as possible(2).

Although these risks are extremely small we recommend that anyone on a regular transfusion programme is tested annually for these infections in line with national guidance.

We also recommend that you are vaccinated against hepatitis B. If you've already had the vaccine, we can do a blood test to check if you need a booster.

How will you get your result?

In the event of a positive result we will contact you. Alternatively, you can ask one of the doctors or nurses on the Apheresis or Haematology Day Unit to look it up for you.

What if your result is negative?

This means that you probably don't have one of these infections. Sometimes it takes time for the viruses to become detectable by blood tests (for example HIV can take up to a month). If you are worried you may have one of these infections for any reason, or want more information, then please ask to speak to one of our doctors.

What if your result is positive?

We will explain what your positive results means, its implications and what the next steps are. We will arrange for you to see a specialist to discuss things further, including what treatment options are available.

What do you need to do?

If you're happy to have the tests just let your nurse know. Alternatively, you can speak to one of the doctors for more information or we can give you more written information.

Contact us

If you have any questions about your condition, please discuss them with a member of the red cell haematology team at your next appointment or using the details below.

Haematology Day Unit: 020 8725 1680

Apheresis Unit: 020 8725 0612

Dr Elizabeth Rhodes (Sickle cell and thalassaemia consultant): Tel: 020 8725 0885

Dr Julia Sikorska (Sickle cell and thalassaemia consultant) Tel: 020 8725 0885

Carol Rose (clinical nurse specialist) Tel: 07825 978812

Sickle cell and thalassaemia secretary Tel: 020 8725 0885

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

References

- (1) : Joint United Kingdom (UK) Blood Transfusion and Tissue Transplantation Services Professional Advisory Committee: <https://www.transfusionguidelines.org/transfusion-handbook/5-adverse-effects-of-transfusion/5-3-infectious-hazards-of-transfusion>
- (2) NHS Blood and Transplant: <https://nhsbtdbe.blob.core.windows.net/umbraco-assets-corp/2159/160511-27360-will-i-need-a-blood-transfusion-final.pdf>

Patient Information Leaflet written with help from Kelly Feane Lead Transfusion Practitioner at St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer). **Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: HAE_VTP_01 **Published:** July 2020 **Review date:** July 2022