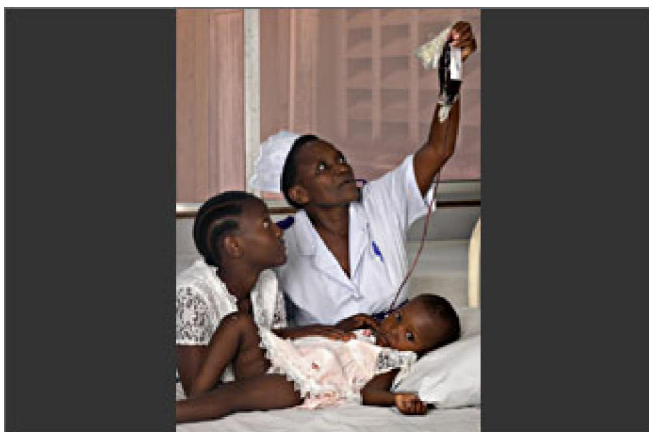


10 facts on blood transfusion



Blood transfusion saves lives and improves health

Many patients requiring transfusion, however, do not have timely access to safe blood and blood products. Every country needs to ensure that supplies of blood and blood products are sufficient and free from HIV, hepatitis viruses and other infections that can be transmitted through transfusion.



Transfusions are used to support various treatments

In high-income countries, transfusion is most commonly used for supportive care in cardiovascular surgery, transplant surgery, massive trauma, and therapy for solid and haematological malignancies. In low- and middle-income countries it is used more often for management of pregnancy-related complications, childhood malaria complicated by severe anaemia, and trauma-related injuries.



Adequate supply of safe blood can only be assured through regular voluntary unpaid donation

Adequate and reliable supply of safe blood can only be assured through a stable base of regular, voluntary, unpaid blood donors. They are the safest group of donors because the prevalence of bloodborne infections is lowest among them. WHO urges Member States to develop national blood systems based on voluntary, unpaid blood donations to achieve the goal of self-sufficiency in safe blood and blood products.



Voluntary unpaid donors account for 100% of blood supplies in 60 countries

In 2011, 71 countries reported collecting more than 90% of their blood supply from voluntary, unpaid blood donors, among them 60 countries collect 100% of blood supply from voluntary unpaid blood donors. But in 73 countries, less than 50% of blood supplies come from voluntary unpaid donors, with much of their blood supply still dependent on family/replacement and paid blood donors.



Around 107 million blood donations are collected globally every year

About 50% of these are donated in low- and middle-income countries where nearly 85% of the world's population lives. The average blood donation rate is more than 9 times greater in high-income countries than in low-income countries.



Collections at blood centres vary according to income group

About 10 000 blood centres in 168 countries report collecting a total of 83 million blood donations. The median annual blood donations per centre is 15 000 in high-income countries, as compared to 3100 in middle- and low-income countries.



More people in high-income countries donate blood than in other countries

The median blood donation rate in high-income countries is 39.2 donations per 1000 people. This compares with 12.6 donations per 1000 people in middle-income countries and 4.0 donations in low-income countries.



Donated blood should always be screened

All donated blood should always be screened for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and syphilis prior to transfusion. Yet 25 countries are not able to screen all donated blood for one or more of these infections. Testing is not reliable in many countries because of staff shortages, poor quality test kits, irregular supplies, or lack of basic quality in laboratories.



A single unit of blood can benefit several patients

Separating blood into its various components allows a single unit of blood to benefit several patients and provides a patient only the blood component which is needed. About 97% of the blood collected in high-income countries, 78% in middle-income countries and 40% in low-income countries is separated into blood components.



Unnecessary transfusions expose patients to needless risk

Often transfusions are prescribed when simple and safe alternative treatments might be equally effective. As a result such a transfusion may not be necessary. An unnecessary transfusion exposes patients to the risk of infections such as HIV and hepatitis and adverse transfusion reactions.