

New York State Council on Human Blood and Transfusion Services

***GUIDELINES FOR MONITORING
TRANSFUSION RECIPIENTS***

Second Edition
2004

**New York State Council on Human Blood and Transfusion Services
New York State Department of Health
Wadsworth Center
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GUIDELINES FOR MONITORING TRANSFUSION RECIPIENTS

1. The patient's vital signs (temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure) should be recorded shortly before transfusion and after the first 15 minutes, and compared to baseline values. Some patients' history or clinical condition may indicate a need for more frequent monitoring.
2. After the transfusion is initiated, the rate of flow should be observed and regulated, according to the physician's orders.
3. During the transfusion, the patient should be observed periodically, especially during the first 10 to 15 minutes, for signs and symptoms of transfusion reaction.
 - a. Hives
 - b. Wheezing
 - c. Fever
 - d. Chills
 - e. Shortness of breath
 - f. Chest pressure
 - g. Back pain
 - h. Change in vital signs

If any of the above occurs, the transfusion should be STOPPED, and the responsible physician notified.

4. If in a medical facility, the patient should be instructed, prior to transfusion, to alert a health care provider of any discomfort or unusual sensations.
5. Upon completion of the transfusion, the patient's vital signs (temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure) should be recorded, and compared with the previous values.
6. The ordering physician/designee should be available to handle any complications. In an ambulatory setting, it is important that the patient be given instructions on potential problems following transfusion and the telephone number to call in the event of a reaction.
7. Monitoring of red cell and platelet increments is essential post-transfusion. However, the timing may depend on the clinical condition of the patient.

PERTINENT LITERATURE

McCallum JL, Pinkerton PH. Blood transfusions, blood alternatives and transfusion reactions: a guide to transfusion medicine. Ontario: Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Center, 2003.

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