If you have any questions about any of the information in this leaflet please ask the doctor or nurse looking after you, they will be happy to try and help you.

Useful sources of information

- NHS Choices
- www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-transfusion

How to contact Trinity

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This leaflet provides information on questions you may have about receiving a blood transfusion.

What is a blood transfusion?
A red blood cell transfusion is a treatment where blood is given to you through your veins from a drip (intravenous line).
The blood will have been taken from a healthy donor and will have been checked to make sure that it is safe to give to another person.

Why should I have a blood transfusion?
A blood transfusion is given to correct abnormalities in the blood which cannot be corrected by any other means.
Most commonly a transfusion is used to treat anaemia. This is when your body does not have enough red blood cells to carry the oxygen you need, which may cause you to feel tired or short of breath.
Sometimes anaemia can be treated with medication, but not all cases respond and you may require transfusion.
Causes of anaemia may include advanced disease, loss of blood after surgery or bleeding and clotting disorders.
Your doctor will explain why you need a transfusion and will also explain what the benefits will be for you. These may include an increase in energy levels and a reduction in breathlessness.

What are the risks?
The risks associated with blood transfusion are rare and must be balanced against the risk to your health of not having the transfusion. Risk is minimised by the careful selection of donors, testing and handling of blood.
The serious risks include an allergic reaction to the blood or the transmission of infection.
You will be closely monitored during your transfusion in order to recognise and treat any reaction.

Consent
It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care.
Before your blood transfusion, and after explanation from your doctor, you will be asked to give verbal consent to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves.
You can withdraw your consent at any time.

During transfusion
You will have had a blood sample taken and this will be matched to a bag of blood in the lab which is suitable for you.
A small plastic tube (cannula) will be placed in your arm and you will be given the blood through this tube (sometimes known as a drip). This usually takes 3-4 hours.
You will have observations before and during the transfusion to make sure everything is ok.

After transfusion
At some point – maybe after discharge depending on your length of stay – we may take another blood sample. This will show what difference the transfusion has made to your red blood cell count, and whether another transfusion would be helpful.

Are there any alternatives?
Not all patients with anaemia will need a blood transfusion – sometimes your symptoms may not be caused by the anaemia but by something else, such as your underlying disease. Therefore transfusion may not help.
Your response to any previous transfusions can help give an indication of how likely it is to help this time.
If there is any reason why you would not accept a blood transfusion (e.g. on religious grounds) then please tell the doctor or nurse caring for you as soon as possible.
If you require further information about alternatives we can supply this, please ask.