



Transfusion Reaction — Recognise and Act

Fever, rigors, itching, pain, breathlessness, dark urine: stop the transfusion, keep the line, call, and follow the card

REACTION? STOP THE TRANSFUSION

Immediately, for every reaction

1. Stop the transfusion. Keep IV access open with 0.9 % saline through a new giving set.
2. Check the patient's identity against the unit and the form again — a mix-up may be the cause.
3. Vital signs; call the doctor; call the laboratory and tell them.
4. Keep the unit, the giving set and all documents; do not discard.

Category	Signs	Manage
Mild	Itching, urticaria only; temp rise < 1.5 °C without other symptoms	Antihistamine; observe 30 min; if resolved, restart slowly with close observation; if any other symptom develops, treat as moderate
Moderate	Fever ≥ 38.5 or rise ≥ 1.5 °C, rigors, restlessness, flushing, rising pulse, mild breathlessness	Do not restart. Paracetamol; antihistamine; oxygen if needed; send samples (below); notify laboratory; use a different unit only after laboratory review
Severe / life-threatening	Hypotension, breathing difficulty, wheeze, chest or loin pain, dark urine, bleeding from sites, collapse, temp ≥ 39	Anaphylaxis → adrenaline 0.5 mg IM, oxygen, fluids. Suspected haemolytic reaction → fluids to maintain urine > 1 ml/kg/h, monitor, ICU. Suspected bacterial contamination → blood cultures from patient and unit, broad-spectrum IV antibiotics. TRALI → oxygen, ventilatory support. Call the most senior doctor now.

Samples and report

Patient: repeat group and cross-match, direct antiglobulin test, full blood count, urea/creatinine, clotting, urine for haemoglobin; blood cultures if fever. Return the unit and giving set to the laboratory. Complete the transfusion reaction report and the incident form (Toolkit 8) the same day; severe reactions go to the Sentinel Event Policy and the national haemovigilance system.

Adapted from WHO Clinical Transfusion Practice guidelines.

ASF standards: Hospital Standard 4 — transfusion safety (reaction management and reporting); Sentinel Event Policy