How can I reduce my need for a blood transfusion?

It is not always possible to avoid having a blood transfusion. However, there are safe and effective options that you can do before surgery to enhance your own blood supply, and possibly reduce the amount of blood loss during surgery.

We may suggest you:

- Eat an iron-rich diet.
- Take iron supplements by mouth or by IV (intravenous, through the vein).
- Take a medicine called erythropoietin (EPO) by injection. EPO may help you produce more RBCs and increase your Hgb levels.
- Donate your own blood.

Depending on the type of surgery you are having, your surgeon, anesthetist, or patient blood management coordinator can talk to you about other options that may reduce your blood loss during surgery.

For more information about blood management or to book an appointment, please contact:

Krystal-Lyn Harder  
Patient Blood Management Coordinator  
Humber River Hospital  
1235 Wilson Ave.  
Toronto, ON M3M 0B2  
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The Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) supports blood conservation. ONTraC is a provincial Blood Conservation Program developed by the MOHLTC.

www.ontracprogram.com

English
This information is important! If you have trouble reading this, ask someone to help you.

Italian
Queste informazioni sono importanti! Se ha difficoltà a leggere questo, chieda aiuto a qualcuno.

Spanish
¡Esta información es importante! Si tiene dificultad en leer esto, pida que alguien le ayude.
What is blood management?
Blood management, or blood conservation, aims to reduce or avoid your need for blood transfusions.
Your surgeon and/or anesthetist and a patient blood management coordinator will:
- Assess your potential need for a transfusion
- Work with you on a plan of care to improve your own blood supply before surgery or lessen your blood loss during and after surgery. This may include one or a combination of treatments.

What are the benefits of blood management?
The benefits may include:
- Shorter hospital stays
- Faster recovery time
- Less exposure to viruses and infection.
Blood management gives you options to transfusions. It also helps preserve the existing hospital blood supply.

What increases my chances of receiving a blood transfusion?
You may have a greater chance of needing a blood transfusion if you have:
- Low hemoglobin levels in your blood before surgery
- Blood loss during or after surgery.

Low hemoglobin levels before surgery
There are many different components in blood. One important part is the red blood cell (RBC). Each red blood cell has an iron-rich protein called hemoglobin (Hgb). Hgb carries and releases the oxygen to all of your organs and tissues.
The goal is to get your Hgb levels in the normal range before surgery. This may help you avoid a blood transfusion.

Before your surgery, your doctor may order a blood test called a complete blood count (CBC) to measure the level of RBC’s and Hgb in your blood.

Normal Hgb ranges for men and women are:
- Men: 130 gm/L to 170 gm/L
- Women: 120 gm/L to 160 gm/L

If your blood test shows your Hgb levels are lower than the normal ranges, we call this “anemia.”
If you are anemic before surgery, your need for a transfusion during your hospital stay to get your Hgb levels back up to a normal level is greater.
If you have anemia, your surgeon will decide if you need more testing and treatment.

Blood loss during or after surgery
With any surgery, you may lose blood during the procedure. The amount of blood you lose will depend upon the type of surgery you are having.
If you lose blood, your surgeon will decide if you need a blood transfusion during, or possibly after your surgery to replace it.