

Blood transfusions

Worksheet A

Red blood cells



The main function of red blood cells is to distribute oxygen to body tissues and to carry waste carbon dioxide back to the lungs.

Red cell transfusions are used to replace heavy blood loss (e.g. trauma, surgery, childbirth) or to correct severe anaemia when the bone marrow is not producing enough red cells (e.g. chemotherapy, leukaemia and thalassaemia). Anaemia is when your haemoglobin levels are lower than normal.

Red cells are filtered to remove the white blood cells and have a 35 day shelf life. Very rare blood groups can be frozen to be used at a later date, but this is not done commonly as it is an expensive and time-consuming process.

From: www.blood.co.uk