

Patient information

Intraoperative Cell Salvage (Non-Obstetrics)

For selected cases of intra-operative haemorrhage in:

- Orthopaedics
- General Surgery
- Urology
- Gynaecology

What is cell salvage?

Cell salvage is the method of collecting a patient's own blood which is lost during an operation and giving it back to them after processing.

During certain operations blood can be collected into a machine which filters then washes blood to remove any contaminants. The blood can then be given back to the patient during the operation or soon afterwards. The advantage of receiving your own blood means it reduces the small risks associated with receiving donated blood eg, reactions to a blood transfusion or transmission of an infection.

Cell salvage is well established in certain types of surgery and is used regularly at the West Suffolk Hospital.

Why am I being offered cell salvage?

If it is thought that you will lose a significant amount of blood during your forthcoming operation, which would result in you needing a blood transfusion, then you may be offered cell salvage as an alternative. Examples would be some major joint operations, especially revision hip replacement, but also certain major gynaecological and abdominal operations.

Sometimes, if your blood count is lower than normal, or if you have a rare blood group, cell salvage is useful to reduce the need for blood transfusion from other donors.

The use of cell salvage will be discussed with you before your planned surgery to enable you to have any questions answered. Sometimes in an emergency, it is not possible to discuss this with you in advance, but you will be informed when you recover from your anaesthetic that you have received a transfusion of your own blood.

When should cell salvage be avoided?

We would not use cell salvage if there was a risk of contamination of your blood. For example, this would include bowel or stomach contents in abdominal surgery. During some orthopaedic operations, special cement is used to fix the new joint in place and cell salvage would be stopped temporarily whilst the cement sets.

If you had an infection, we would discuss the risks and benefits of using the cell saver with you on an individual basis before proceeding.

Similarly, we would discuss its use with you if you have known cancer. However, cell salvage has been used in certain cases of cancer surgery quite safely.

How are any complications prevented?

We always ensure there are staff present in theatre who are familiar with the use of the cell salvage machine. The washing and filtering of the blood within the machine makes the blood safe to use, however, in the vast majority of cases as an extra precaution we use an additional filter when we give the blood back to you. On rare occasions it is not appropriate to use the extra filter.

Will I need other blood?

It is never possible for the cell saver to retrieve every drop of blood you lose during surgery. Whilst it will reduce your chances of needing blood donated by others, we may still need to use blood from other donors in cases of major blood loss. However, this is likely to be much less than if a cell saver had not been used.

Is it acceptable to those who decline blood products?

This will depend on the views of the individual. Cell salvage is deemed acceptable by many patients of Jehovah's Witness faith. However, it will only replace the red blood cells. It will not replace your clotting factors which are important components which reduce bleeding in some major operations.

Can I get further information?

Your surgeon or anaesthetist will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the use of the cell saver.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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