



Blood Cell Transplants: Allografts

A booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander patients and their families

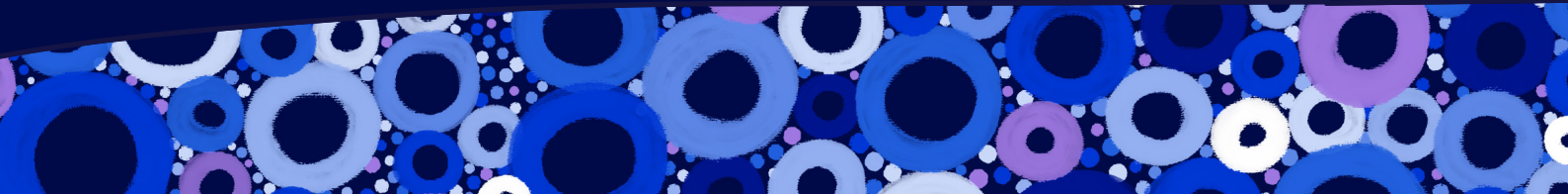
Book Five

Text & Illustrations by Simone Thomason

Cover artwork by Navada Currie

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The author sincerely acknowledges and pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Traditional Owners, past, present and emerging, on whose land these booklets have been developed and gives thanks for their on-going willingness to share their knowledge and wisdom.



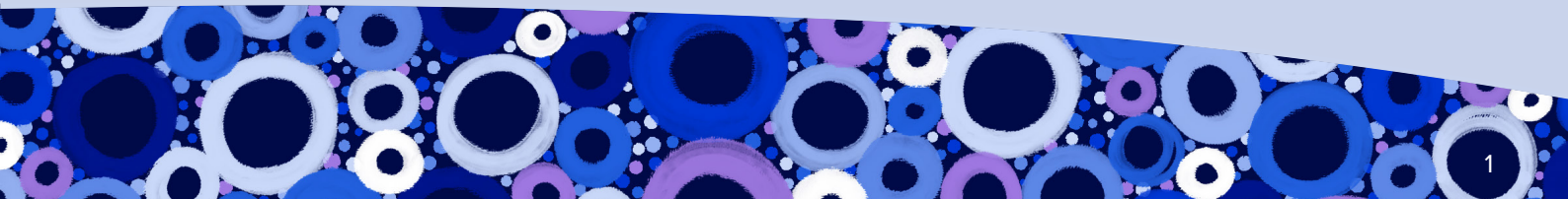
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Blood Cell Transplants: Allografts, A Booklet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families, is book five in a series of five educational booklets. The booklets are primarily visual teaching tools, designed to meet the comprehension needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, diagnosed with a blood cancer, and their families. This resource may also benefit all patients, including cultural and linguistically diverse people groups whose main language is not English.

Disclaimer: This booklet is not intended to provide or be a replacement for medical advice.

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Cover artwork © Navada Currie, 2022.

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The Leukaemia Foundation uses real-life stories to provide education, inspiration and hope. If you have an experience of blood cancer you'd like to share, please email storyhub@leukaemia.org.au

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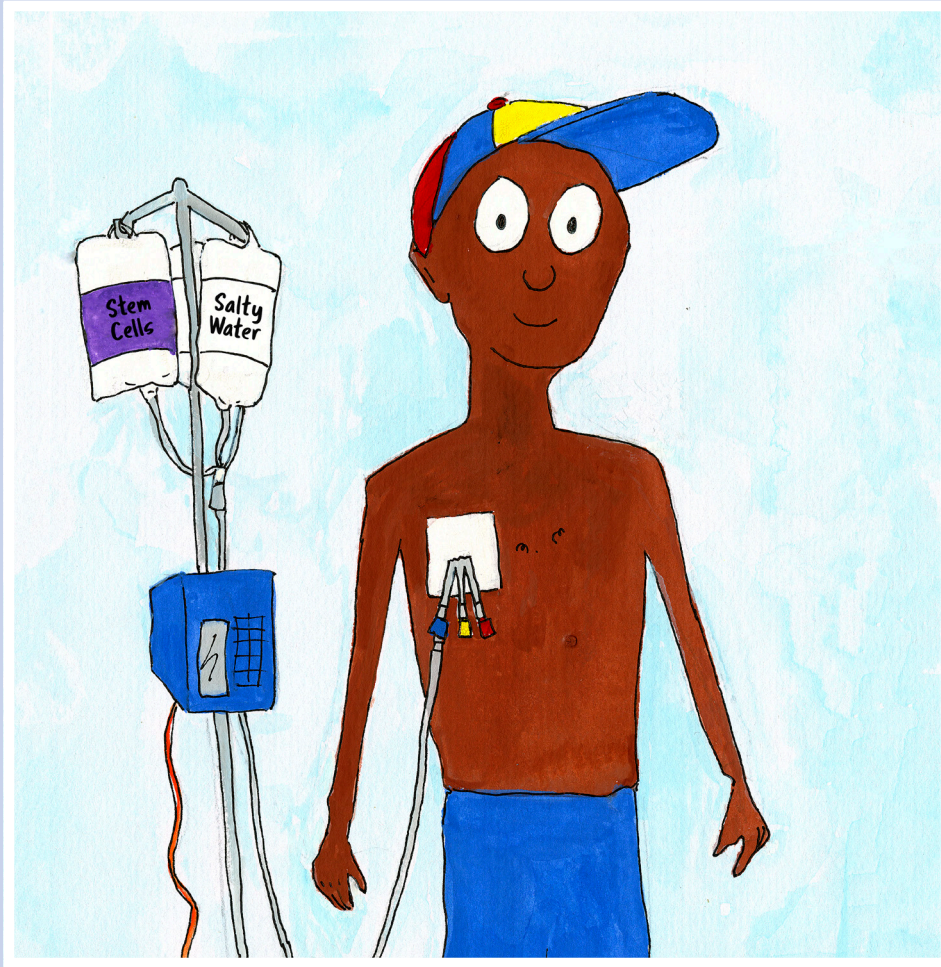
The next treatment

The doctors, blood nurse, ILO and interpreter will sit with you and your family and talk about the next treatment, called a young blood cell transplant.

Your family can be on the TV link or phone from home.

Your family can help a lot with this transplant.





What is a young blood cell transplant?

Some blood cancers are hard to get rid of with just chemo. So, you will need a young blood cell transplant also called a **stem cell transplant**.

The word transplant means to swap one thing with another. This transplant means that after you have chemo to help you get well your blood cells are swapped with young blood cells donated to you.

Where will you have the transplant?

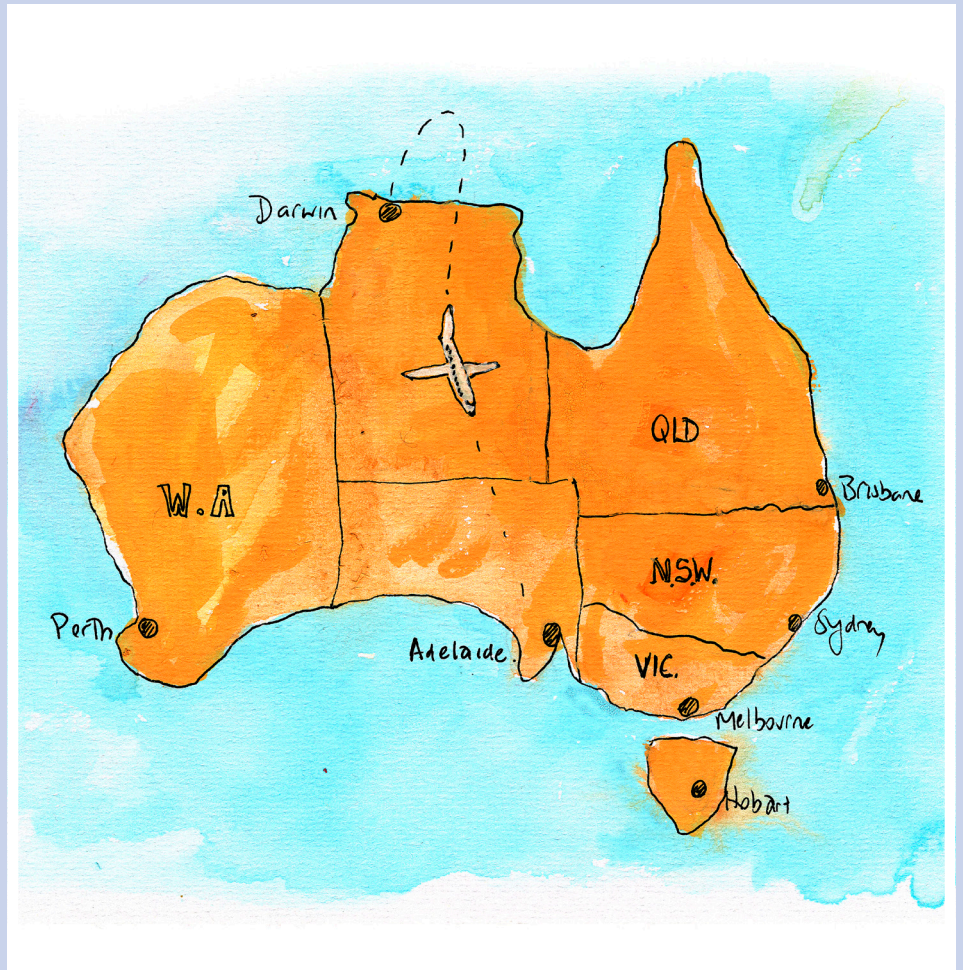
The transplant may not be able to be given to you in the hospital where you are.

Usually, the hospitals in the large cities do the transplants, as they have more people there to help you.

Transplants will take weeks and months to do.

If you and your family agree to have the transplant you will all travel to the transplant hospital.

The doctors will let you know if you will stay in a hostel or need to go into hospital, when you get there.





Your transplant team

You will meet another hospital team called the “transplant” team, they will be expecting you.

They will also explain things to you and your family.

You and your family will be able to talk to these doctors and nurses over the TV link before you travel for the transplant.

There will be church ministers, language speakers - interpreters and ILOs to help you there too.

How your family can help

Your brothers and sisters who are from the same mum and dad as you, will be asked to do a special blood test.

Sometimes your mum or dad may also be asked to have this blood test.

This test checks how much your blood cells are like your brothers and sisters.

If you have no brothers or sisters, the doctors can still help you.





A family match

If one of your sister's or brother's blood test shows that their blood is like yours, they are a match to you.

The doctor and blood nurse will talk to you, your family, the decision makers, and Elders, and ask your match to donate some of their blood cells to you.

Your brother or sister cannot get sick from doing this for you.

If it is agreed that your brother or sister can help you, they will need to sign a consent form.

Then you, your carer and your brother or sister will leave country and travel down to the city for the transplant.

If your brothers and sisters are not a match, the doctors and nurses will talk to you about how they can look for another match for you, from someone else.

Using your brother's or sister's young blood cells

The young blood cells that live inside the large bones are special cells called stem cells which can grow to be any cell the body needs.

Some of your brother's or sister's young blood cells will need to be collected to help heal you.





How the young blood cells are collected

Your sister or brother will need to have a special medicine needle, given under the skin every day for a few days.

This medicine moves the young blood cells from their bones into their blood.

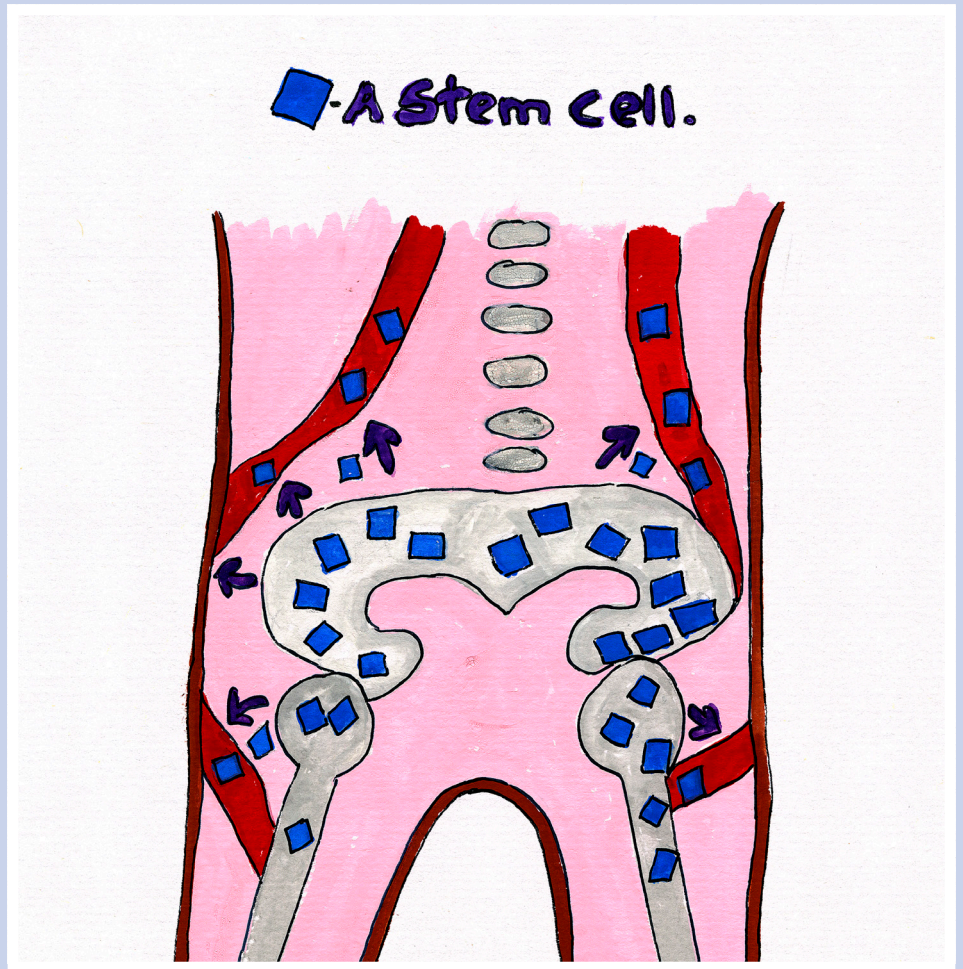
Your brother or sister may be able to give themselves the needles or the nurse can do it for them.

This medicine can make their bones feel a bit achy, the nurses will give them pain relief tablets for the ache.

What the medicine does

This picture shows inside the body. The medicine makes the young blood cells move out of the hip bones and into the blood in the veins.

Your sister or brother will have blood tests every day, to see when they have enough young blood cells in their blood.





A special machine

When they have enough young blood cells in their blood they will go onto a machine, like the one in this picture.

They will be on the machine for a few hours over 1 - 2 days.

This machine spins their blood and collects a small amount of their young blood cells into a bag.

They may need a special tube in their neck to help collect the blood cells.

Being on the machine does not hurt them and you can sit with them when they are on the machine.

After a few days' rest, your brother/sister can go back home to country.

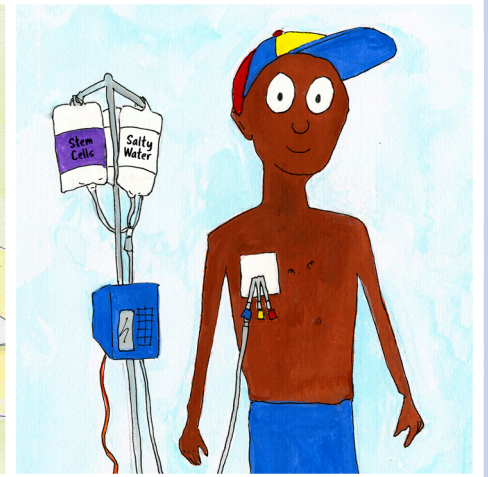
What next?

You will have more scans and tests followed by chemo.

You may get a special tube inserted into your chest for the chemo (Hickman catheter).

You will need to sign a consent form for the chemo and the transplant.

You may also need special X-ray treatment called radiotherapy. Your doctor will tell you if you need this.





Chemo

In hospital you will be in a room on your own to protect you from germs.

Your family won't be able to stay with you, but they can visit every day.

The chemo is very strong and gets rid of most of your blood cells.


After chemo your brother or sister's young blood cells are given to you, to help you heal from this chemo.

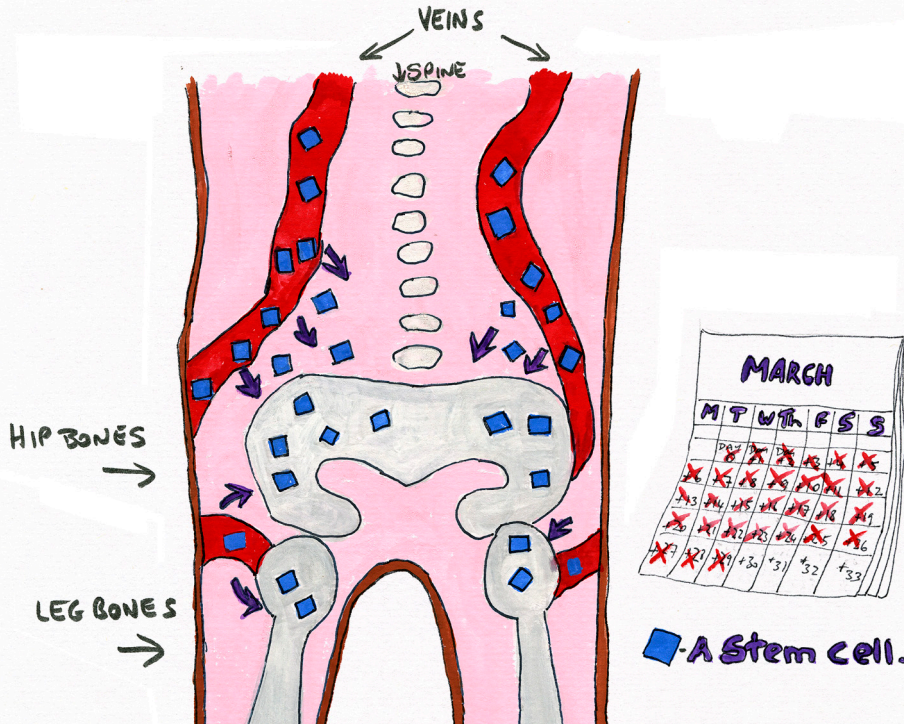
Being in hospital

When your family visit you in hospital, they will have to wash their hands well and use a mask. They may also need to put on a gown like the nurses do.

You will need to be in hospital for weeks or months to help you recover from the strong chemo.



Day 0  Day + 30



What the new blood cells do in your body

Day 0 is the day you get the young blood cells (stem cells) from your brother, sister or donor given to you.

Day 1 onwards is the time the young blood cells move from your blood into your bones.

When the stem cells are in your bones, they grow older and then go to work.

Working blood cells

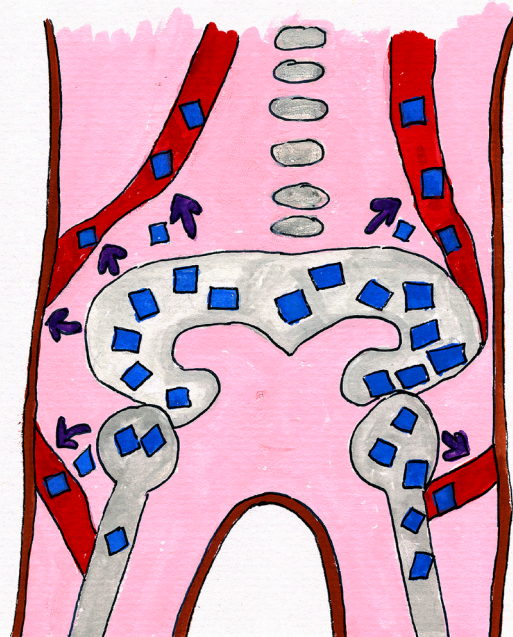
It will take time for these young blood cells to start working.

You will stay in hospital until you have enough working cells.

You will need to have bags of blood to keep you strong while you wait for the young blood cells to work.



Day +30

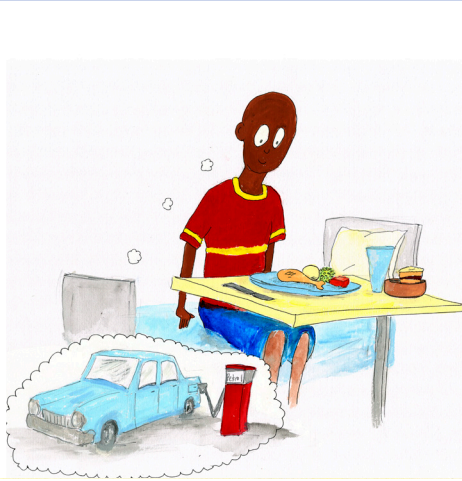


Staying well

You can feel weak and lose weight at this time.

You may get sores in your mouth and eating can be painful.

The doctors may need to put a tube into your stomach, through your nose to feed you milky food to rest your mouth.



Things you and your family can do to help

You will need to do all the same things you did when you first had chemo, to keep yourself well.



It can be a tough time



Sometimes after a stem cell transplant, your body gets more crook before it gets better.

Your body can struggle with your brother's or sister's young blood cells.

This can make you feel unwell. You may get fevers, itchy skin, runny poos, stomach pains and vomiting.



Press the buzzer and talk to the nurses when you are unwell.

The nurses will give you medicines to help you.

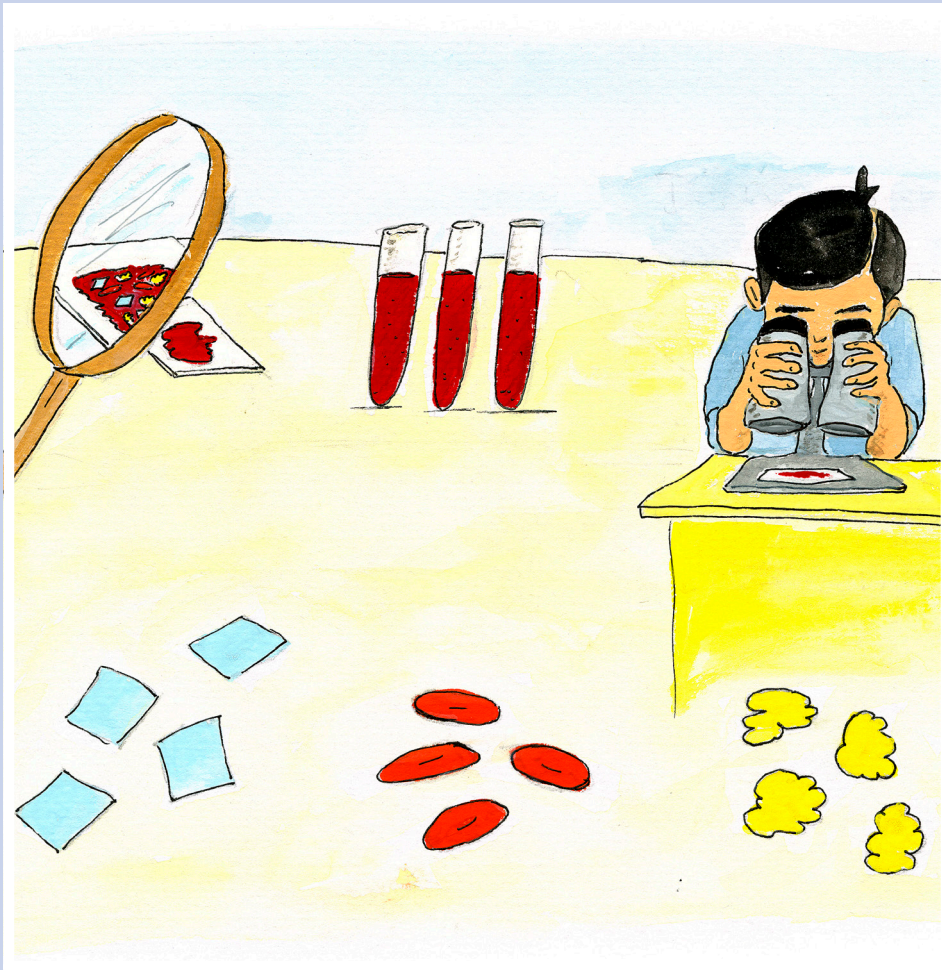
Staying strong

The transplant team want to help you to beat the blood cancer, so you can return home to country and live with family again.

Having the transplant can take a long time for you and your family.

When you have any worries, talk to the nurses caring for you, they can ask the church minister, interpreter, or ILO, to see you.





When you have recovered

When you have enough working blood cells, you can leave hospital and go to the hostel nearby.

You will travel in from the hostel to the hospital a few times a week to see the transplant team and have a blood test.

When your blood is fully healed and strong you will return home to country.

When you are back home

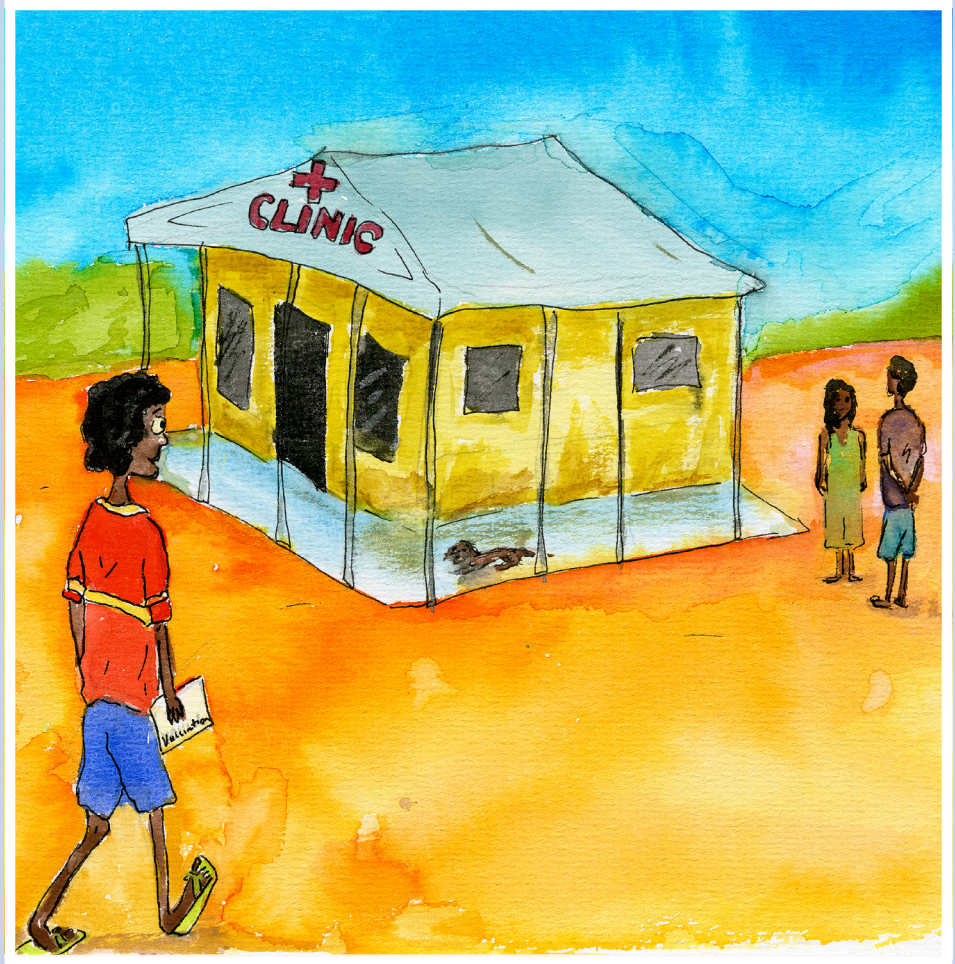
Back home, you will need to have check-ups and blood tests with your doctor in the community.

You will also need to leave country to see your blood doctor back at the city hospital for check-ups.

Having the transplant will change your immune system.

You will have to start your vaccination needles again. These are the needles you had when you were a baby and child, which stop you getting sicknesses such as measles and mumps.

Your doctor in the community can give these to you.





When can I have children?

For two years or longer after the transplant, it is best not to try and have children. The chemo you had will cause the baby to get sick and not form well inside the mother.

When having sex, to stop getting pregnant you or your partner need to use a condom.

When/if you are ready to have children, you may have sperm or eggs saved at the fertility doctors, which you can use to have children with your partner.

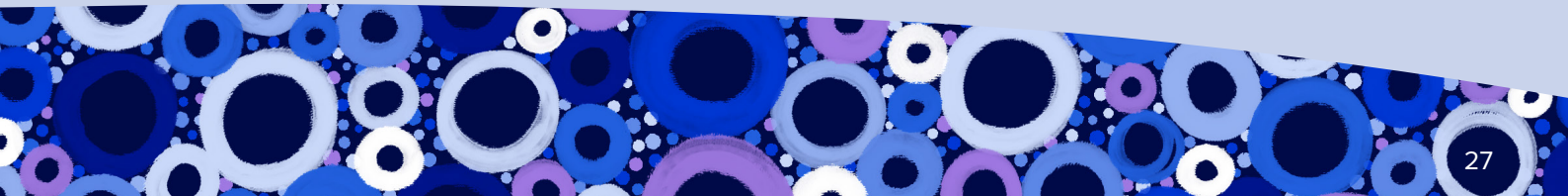
They can arrange for you to see the family/fertility doctors to discuss this more.

End of Book Five

We hope this booklet has helped you and your family learn about young blood cell transplants (stem cell transplants).

Common questions

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Abbreviations and references

Allograft transplant – your family member’s young blood stem cells are given to you after strong chemo.

Blood Nurse (Cancer Care Coordinator) – a member of the team who works with patients with blood changes and their families.

Dietician – a member of the team who specialises in the right food for you to keep you well and strong.

Feeling Crook – feeling nauseated, vomiting, or having an upset stomach pain.

Finishing Up – dying or passing away.

Germs – infection causing pathogens: bacteria; viruses; fungus.

Haematologist – specialist blood doctor.

Hickman Line/Tube – a central line inserted into the large vein in a patient’s chest to enable fluids to be given and blood samples taken.

Leukaemia – blood cancer of the white blood cells.

ILO/Indigenous Liaison Officers – are staff members who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families.

Lymph System – a network of tubes and glands in your body, which holds certain types of white cells. These tubes carry excess fluid from the blood and the white cells clean the fluid and fight infection.

Lymphoma – cancer of a white cell usually found in the lymph system.

Myeloma – a cancer of plasma cells which is a type of white blood cell.

OT/Occupational Therapist – who help with equipment for home and hospital.

Pharmacist – a member of the team who specialises in medicines and drugs.

PICC Line/Tube – (a peripherally inserted central catheter) or special tubes inserted into the upper arm. Fluids and medicines can go into these tubes and blood samples can be taken from them without using needles.

Physio/Physiotherapist – a member of the team who gives you exercises to do so your body stays fit and strong.

Radiotherapy – special X-ray used to kill cancer cells.

Stem Cell Transplant – also known as a young blood cell transplant.

Sorry Business – a funeral or a time for grieving and remembering people who have died.

Special Blood Machine/Apheresis Machine – a blood cell separator, used to collect stem or young cells, before a transplant.

Transplant – means to move something from one place to another place.

Vaccinations – activate and protect the immune system to fight against certain diseases.

Young Blood Cell Transplant – young blood cells or stem cells are collected and given to a patient after strong chemo.

References:

Cancer Institute of NSW (2020) Retrieved from www.eviq.org.au

Leukaemia Foundation (2020) Retrieved from www.leukaemia.org.au

Need to talk?

Contact us on 1800 620 420
leukaemia.org.au

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Helpful phone numbers and contacts

You might like to write down some of the contact details for the people you're talking with and make some notes about important stuff.

Emergency Ambulance: 000

Blood nurse (cancer care coordinator): _____

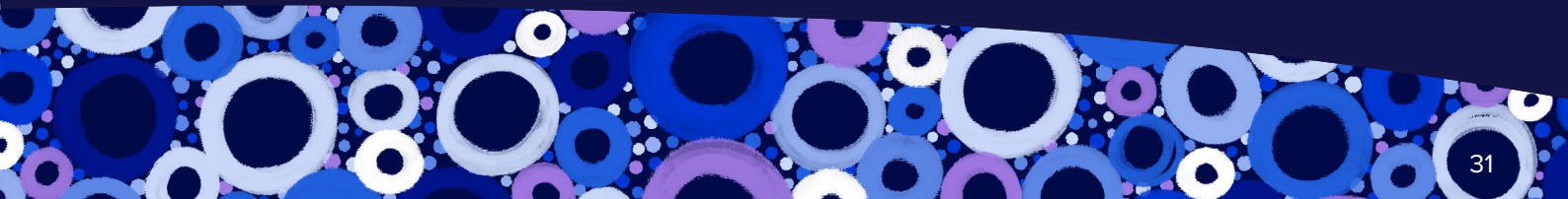
Cancer Council: _____

Health Worker: _____

ILO: _____

Cancer Day Unit: _____

Hospital number: _____





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