



## **'Do they know who you are?'**

### **Factsheet for Patients**

#### **Why does it matter that the staff know who I am?**

A blood transfusion which doesn't match your blood can cause a harmful reaction. This is one of the more common causes of complications from a blood transfusion. It is prevented by matching donated blood with a carefully identified sample from you.

#### **How can healthcare staff check my identity?**

The staff should ask you to state your full name and date of birth and check your identification band, before taking a blood sample.

When you are ready to receive your blood transfusion they will ask you to confirm your identity and check your identification band. This is very important for your safety, because if the wrong blood (meant for someone else) is given to you, this could cause serious medical problems.

At the bedside before the transfusion is started, staff will check your identity again, as well as the unit of blood. Staff must follow strict checking procedures before every transfusion.

#### **The staff know my name, do I really need to wear an identification band?**

When you are in hospital, you must wear an identification band with accurate details about you on it. It ensures that staff can accurately identify you and give you the right care. You should check that the details on the identification band are correct and inform the staff immediately if they are not.

A member of staff should put an identification band on you as soon as you are admitted to hospital and you should wear this throughout your stay.

#### **What should I do if I don't have an identification band?**

If you do not have an identification band, please ask a member of staff for one. If it comes off or is uncomfortable, please ask a member of staff to replace it.

#### **I'm attending the hospital as an outpatient, do I need an identification band?**

Not usually. However, it is still important that the staff ask you to state your full name and date of birth before taking any blood samples or undertaking any other procedures.

#### **If I'm attending as a day patient, do I need an identification band?**

You should have an identification band at all times if you are a hospital in-patient, even if it is just for one day. For patients who attend regularly, some hospitals issue photographic identity badges, which should be worn at all times when you are in the hospital. The staff also should still ask you to state your full name and date of birth before taking any blood samples or before starting a blood transfusion.

## **I've been coming to hospital for years and the staff all know me. Do they really need to ask me my details every time?**

Yes, it is very important for them to do this. They may know you, but they don't know the bag of blood that may be given to you.

## **What if I am unable to confirm my identity?**

Staff must still carry out careful identity checks, and will particularly rely on checking the identification band. They may also ask your relatives, and their colleagues, to check whether your identification band is accurate. If you do not have an identification band, then you or your relatives must inform the staff as soon as possible.

In some cases you may be unable to wear an identification band for medical reasons. The staff will have alternative methods for confirming identity in this instance.

## **Can a name above the bed be used to check identity?**

No. This may be dangerous. If a previous patient's name has not been removed in time, this could lead to an identification error.

Similarly, staff should not identify you from any documents left by the bed. These may relate to another patient and have been left there in error. Staff should always check identification verbally where possible, and also by carefully reading the identification band.

## **How can I help in my care?**

Patients and staff working together can make care safer. It is perfectly acceptable for you to remind staff to check your identity and they should encourage you to do this. This helps to avoid staff assuming you are the right patient because some of your details match their lists.

As mentioned previously, it is also important to check that your identification band has the correct details.

## **Why do I need to check my identification band – surely the staff have all my details and they just need to copy them?**

Errors can occasionally happen, such as wrong spelling of names and addresses; or mishearing of names, dates, and numbers.

## **Why do they also ask me to check the first line of my address as well as my full name and date of birth in Wales?**

This is a requirement of the Welsh healthcare system, but does not apply to the other countries in the UK.

