

Blood Testing information sheet

BASMU

Nov 2014

Why do we need to take your blood?

In Antarctica there is no blood bank as there is in UK. If someone acutely ill or injured requires a blood transfusion we need to know that blood is available “on the hoof”, and that we have up to date information about the safety of that blood for transfusion. For that reason we undertake Blood Transfusion Screening for wintering staff and request the blood group for summer only staff. Some summer only staff may be asked to undertake this screening to maintain a viable donor pool in the Antarctic.

Who will take the blood?

Blood samples will usually be collected by either the doctor at your medical examination or by one of the BASMU team at conference. They are all fully trained and practised at blood sampling.

What can I expect?

The sample will usually be taken from a vein in your arm. Individuals all vary in how difficult the procedure is to undertake. Sometimes this means that the blood does not flow first time round and the procedure needs to be repeated. Multiple repeats will not be undertaken. Two small tubes of blood will be taken and sent to the Blood Transfusion Service for analysis. You should get a card with your blood group on it in due course. The results of other tests will be sent to BASMU and we will contact you **ONLY** if there is an abnormality. As with any invasive procedure there is a small risk of complications. It is not at all uncommon for there to be a small bruise at the sampling site. A larger accumulation of blood under the skin (haematoma) happens in about 5% of people.

To help prevent haematoma you should apply firm pressure over the sampling site with your thumb or forefinger (over a swab) for at least 3 minutes by the clock.

Bending the elbow over a pad of cotton wool does not prevent bleeding.

What if I do develop a problem?

If you do have a problem afterwards, which you think is significant, then please contact the practise nurses (Sue Lawrey or Alison Hunt) at BASMU so that we are aware that this is happened. We may ask for more details. If the problem prevents you from working or restricts you significantly consider filling in a BAS AINM report.

If you have to see your GP please ask that details are sent to BASMU.

BASMU Contacts:

Telephone 01752 315220 (not always manned, but there is an answer phone.)

Email: Sue Lawrey

Alison Hunt

Dr Anne Hicks (Medical Director BASMU) annehicks1@nhs.net

What if I don't want to give blood for a test?

It is a BAS requirement (see Blood Transfusion Policy) that everyone who is going to winter in the Antarctic is tested. If we already know your blood group AND that you cannot for medical reasons give blood as a donor, you do not need annual testing.

Because of previous system problems when blood has been taken elsewhere, BASMU would ask that you use our system whenever possible, and discuss exceptional circumstances with us. It may be possible for you to have a test at your GP surgery, although some practises will charge and you will not be able to claim this back.