



Patient & Family Guide
2019

Antibodies and Surgery

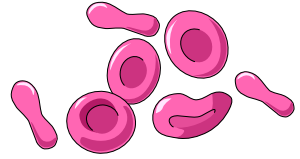


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Antibodies and Surgery

What are antibodies?

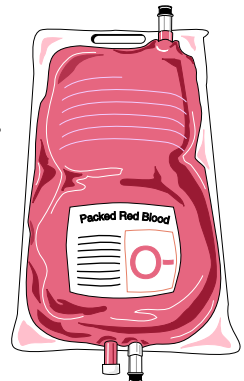
- Antibodies are proteins in your blood that protect you from disease. They are made by your body's immune system.
- When something that doesn't belong in your body gets in, such as germs or a virus, your immune system sends signals to specific cells telling them to make antibodies.
- These antibodies then attach to the germs or virus, and help to stop them from hurting you.
- Some of these antibodies may stay in your blood for the rest of your life. Antibodies do not cause any health problems.



Why does my immune system make antibodies?

Your immune system makes antibodies for a number of reasons. Usually it is because you:

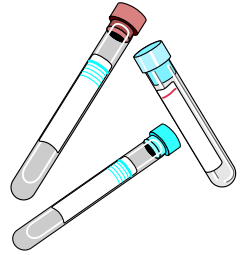
- › come into contact with germs or a virus
- › have had a blood transfusion



- › have a disease that makes your body attack itself, like lupus, arthritis, or Crohn's disease
- › are pregnant

How do you test for antibodies?

- We will take a blood sample and send it to a lab to test for antibodies. The lab will check if you have antibodies and find out what type they are.
- If you have antibodies in your blood, the blood transfusion service will set aside matched blood before your surgery in case you need a transfusion.
- Depending on the type of antibodies you have, your surgery may be delayed until the right blood match is found.



I have antibodies. What does this mean?

- If you have antibodies, we will mail a card to your primary health care provider after your surgery. If you do not have a primary health care provider, the card will be mailed to the specialist. Once you get your card, keep it in your wallet.
- Any time you need a blood transfusion, show this card to your health care team.

- If you need surgery, and have been told that you have antibodies and you have an antibody card, please tell your surgeon's office. Bring the card to your pre-admission clinic appointment, and tell the staff that you have antibodies.
- If you have antibodies, you will need to have a blood sample taken 3 days before your surgery. We do this to make sure that we have the right blood match ready in case you need it during surgery.

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.