

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT STEM CELL TRANSPLANTS



Stem cell transplants replace damaged blood cells with healthy ones. Here are some questions you might have before having a transplant.

What is a stem cell?

Stem cells are a special type of cell that develop in the bone marrow. They develop into different types of blood cells, which have different jobs in your body.

Why would I need a stem cell transplant?

Certain types of cancer affect the blood. Treatments like chemotherapy are used for these types of cancer but it can also damage or destroy blood cells. Having a stem cell transplant replaces damaged cells with healthy cells.

Why might I need a stem cell transplant?

Stem cell transplants are used when people with blood cancer have had treatment but the cancer is still there afterwards, or if cancer comes back. They are also used for people with bone marrow disorders, like aplastic anaemia.



How do stem cell transplants work?

Before you have a stem cell transplant you will have chemotherapy or radiotherapy to clear the bone marrow and make space for the donor cells to come in and make healthy blood cells. After this has happened your immune system will rebuild over time.

How are the stem cells transplanted?

You'll have the donated stem cells transplanted into you using a drip that goes into a central line or a cannula, transferring the cells into a vein.

What happens after a stem cell transplant?

Stem cell transplants temporarily affect your immune system, which means you're at a greater risk of infections. You'll be in a single room for a few weeks to reduce the chances of you getting an infection. This is sometimes called 'protective isolation'.

What side effects might I experience?

Having a stem cell transplant can have side effects – but most of these are caused by the high-dose chemotherapy, rather than the actual transplant. The most common side effect specifically from the transplant is Graft versus host disease. Your care team will be able to tell you more about this.



You can find more information about stem cell transplants and possible side effects at **www.teenagecancertrust.org/stemcell**