Addendum: The June 15, 2000 issue of The Watchtower announced that Jehovah's Witnesses may now accept “fractions of any of the primary components” of blood. Previously, Witnesses had been permitted to accept only fractions of plasma proteins. This expanded policy will permit JW's to accept numerous additional blood therapies and treatments. The WT specifically mentions interferons and interleukins from white cells and a wound healing factor from platelets. More importantly, the policy opens the door to the use of hemoglobin based blood substitutes like “PolyHeme”, that are close to obtaining FDA approval. This is an important development since hemoglobin based blood substitutes, obtained from fractioning red cells, have the potential to save many Jehovah's Witness lives that are presently being lost in cases of trauma or surgery with massive unanticipated blood loss.

References and footnotes
2 -Watchtower, 6/1/90 p.31.
5 -“Make Sure of All Things”, Revised 4/1/57, p. 47; Watchtower, Sept. 15, 1961, p. 558. Although the WTS will still occasionally imply that a blood transfusion is feeding on blood, this position has been quietly abandoned beginning in the 1960's, and we usually read statements like “it is wrong to sustain ourselves with blood,” although this expression or idea is not found in the Scriptures.
7 -Awake! 6/22/72 p.29-30.
8 -Awake! 6/22/82 p.25.
10 -Awake! 10/22/90, p.9
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Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood

The Associated Jehovah's Witnesses for Reform on Blood, is a diverse group of Witnesses from many countries, including elders and other organization officials, Hospital Liaison Committee members, Doctors, Lawyers, Child Advocates and members of the general public who have volunteered their time and energies in an effort to bring about an end to a tragic and misguided policy that has claimed thousands of lives, many of them children.

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Important questions go unanswered
This illustration is taken from the October 22, 1990 issue of Awake! You will note that plasma constitutes 55% of the blood. Since the Watchtower Society allows Witnesses to accept the separate components of plasma, it is only reasonable to ask why they forbid the use of plasma itself?
Consider two patients who are unable to eat, and are admitted to a hospital. One is given a blood transfusion and the other intravenous feedings, which one is receiving nourishment and will live?

Clearly, doctors do not prescribe blood transfusions to treat malnutrition, but rather to replace something your body has lost, usually the red cells needed to transport oxygen and keep you alive. Since it cannot be established that a blood transfusion is a critical link necessary to Biblically support the Watchtower blood policy does not exist.

Learning from the context of Biblical statements regarding blood

If one takes the time to carefully study all of the Biblical accounts regarding blood, it becomes quite clear that whenever the wrongful use of blood is mentioned, it is always in the context of eating blood, as the Watchtower itself has acknowledged at various times.

Each time the prohibition of blood is mentioned in the Scriptures it is in connection with taking it as food, and so it is as a nutrient that we are concerned with in its being forbidden.

Watchtower 9/15/58, p. 575

Learning from Jehovah God's creation

Current Watchtower teaching is that the allowed blood components are limited to only those that pass through the placental barrier during pregnancy and that on this basis a Witness may accept them in good conscience. The reasoning is that since Jehovah God allows these blood components to pass from mother to child, it is logical to conclude that God wouldn't break his own law. This might seem reasonable were it not for the fact that medical science has shown that practically all blood components pass through the placental barrier.

"...practically all blood components pass through the placental barrier."

Are only the smallest blood components permitted?

Sometimes it is argued that the blood components allowed by the Watchtower Society are tiny fractions of blood. Even this line of argument cannot be used since albumin, which is found in blood plasma and is approved for use by the Watchtower Society, makes up a much greater percentage of the blood volume (2.2%) than forbidden blood components like white blood cells (1%), and platelets (0.17%), which Witnesses must reject. Additionally, hemophilic treatments, which are permitted, require the collection and storage of massive quantities of blood (up to 2500 blood donors for a single treatment), yet the Watchtower Society forbids Witnesses from storing their own blood. Why does a double standard exist?

"Transfused blood cannot be used by your body as food anymore so than can a transplanted heart or kidney."

The Watchtower has tried to overcome this fact by arguing that a blood transfusion is no different than being fed intravenously with dextrose or alcohol. These comparisons are misleading, however, because sugar and alcohol can in fact be used by the body as food without digestion. Transfused blood cannot be used by your body as food anymore than can a transplanted heart or kidney.

How does theWatchtower Society justify their partial ban on blood?

No reputable modern doctor or scientist would state that a blood transfusion is a feeding on blood, or the equivalent of eating blood, but rather as an organ or liquid tissue transplant the Society itself now acknowledges. The current policy has been developed in a careless fashion over the years and there are many similarities to the Watchtower's previous bans on vaccines and organ transplants.

"...the Watchtower has created a new law for Witnesses by stating that it's wrong to sustain life by means of blood."

Do Jehovah's Witnesses really abstain from blood?

Most Jehovah's Witnesses would answer a resounding YES! But as even this brief consideration of the facts has shown, the answer is no. Can you explain why the Watchtower Society permits the use of blood products like albumin, EPO, blood serums/Immunoglobulins, and hemophilic treatments (clotting factors VIII & IX) since these are clearly taken to sustain life? How can this honestly be considered as abstaining from blood? The obvious answer is that it cannot. If the medical use of blood is wrong, we cannot pick and choose which blood fractions or products we will abstain from anymore than we can engage in a little fornication or a little idol worship. Such reasoning is seriously flawed.