



NATL 213 02
(RELATES TO NATS CLIN APH 033, 034)
SNBTS PLASMAPHERESIS
DONOR SIDE EFFECTS INFORMATION SHEET



Plasma donation by machine: What does it involve?

In simple terms, plasmapheresis (or plasma-only donation) is when you make a blood donation, but only give the plasma part of the blood - the plasma is separated from the red blood cells, platelets and white blood cells, and these are returned to your body as you donate.

This procedure is carried out using a machine called a cell separator. Firstly, a needle is inserted into a vein in your arm and connected to a sterile one-use kit. This takes the blood into a chamber in the machine where it is spun round, called the centrifuge chamber. Due to the speed and force of the centrifuge, the blood separates into its different parts (red cells, platelets and plasma). The plasma can be collected and the remainder of the blood returned to you.

How long does it take?

The machine calculates how long the procedure will take depending on your height, weight and haemoglobin level. As a rough guide, it normally takes between 35 minutes and 40 minutes to donate. Once we add in the time to check your health and wellbeing and get your permission to proceed, it takes up to 90 minutes from start to finish, and often a bit less.

Can I donate again?

We are very grateful to you for offering to make your precious donation today. Your plasma will be checked to see if it has antibodies to the Covid-19 virus and if so, whether they're in high enough amounts to be used to treat patients with severe Covid-19. We know that not everyone who has had Covid-19 develops antibodies, or in high enough amounts for their plasma to be used to treat patients, therefore we have to test each sample. We hope you would like to donate again.

At the end of your donation, we ask if you would like to make another appointment to donate. If your antibody levels are not present in high enough amounts, we will contact you to discuss further donation options.

How often can I donate?

If you have high levels of antibody, it is likely you will be offered a further appointment two to four weeks after your previous donation. Normally we would ask you to donate for about two to three months – if you are able to donate weekly, this would be tremendous, but normally every two weeks is fine.

What should I do before donating?

Make sure you've had plenty to drink before coming to give Convalescent Plasma. Avoid drinks such as coffee, tea or alcohol as they can dehydrate you.

We'll also give you 500ml of water to drink when you arrive. This might seem a lot, but we know it will make you less likely to feel faint. Keeping hydrated is the best way to avoid fainting.

Don't donate on an empty stomach - make sure you've eaten well before you come. However, avoid fatty, oily or greasy meals as these can affect the quality of your plasma.

What blood checks are done before donating?

Blood samples are taken before you donate to check your haemoglobin level, to make sure you are not anaemic. Blood samples are then taken at the start of every procedure from a pouch attached to



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the kit. These samples are tested after you have donated (but before your plasma is used) to check that there is no evidence of past infection from viruses such as hepatitis B, C and E, HIV, HTLV and syphilis. A check will also be done to make sure that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is not present in your blood. The amount of protein in your blood is also checked as a small amount will be removed in the plasma. This ensures that it is safe for you to continue with further plasma donation

Tell me about the kit that is used.

There is no risk of you being exposed to someone else's blood during plasma donation. We use sterile disposable kits made up of tubing, a sample pouch, separation chambers and bags which are single-use (used for you only). Before the donation, each kit must be checked before it can be loaded into the machine. The machine performs some safety checks and a solution of blood thinner, or anticoagulant, is then run into the machine. This solution is called ACD-A and allows your blood to be processed without it clotting.

At the end of the procedure, the empty kit and unused ACD-A are discarded, and new ones are used for the next donor.

Are there any risks or side effects associated with donating plasma?

Donor comfort is of the utmost importance so it is vital that if you are uncomfortable during your donation, you highlight this to a member of staff. Our team will take the best possible care of you.

However, please be aware that you *may* experience the following:

1. Bruising

In plasma donation, the blood travels from your vein through a needle into the machine to be processed. Once the blood has been separated and the plasma collected, the remaining blood cells will be returned to you through the same vein. This flow of blood between you and the machine is maintained by pumps, which means that there is a slight risk of bruising if the needle moves during the donation. For the most part, bruising is prevented by sensitive pressure detectors on the machine but if you are donating and you feel tightness, tingling or pain near the needle, tell a member of staff immediately.

2. Citrate effect

To prevent the blood from clotting in the centrifuge chamber and disposable kit, an anticoagulant solution (ACD-A) is added to the blood as it leaves your arm. Some of this solution will be returned to you with the blood cells you get back during the donation. The active ingredient of the anticoagulant solution is called citrate. Most donors will be unaware this is happening. However, for some donors, having even a small amount of citrate in their system can cause side effects such as tingling around the mouth, fingertips or toes, a metallic taste, or chills.

You will be asked throughout the procedure if you are experiencing any of these side effects, and you must inform a member of staff immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.

If this side effect does happen, it is easy to manage. The speed and amount of the citrate being returned to you can be reduced.

3. Feeling faint

Some donors may feel faint during plasma donation; this is because although only a small amount of your blood is in the machine being processed at any one time, some people can be quite sensitive to this. If you feel lightheaded or unwell during donation, inform a member of staff so this can be



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managed promptly. Making sure you are well hydrated before donating is the best way to avoid feeling faint.

4. Stopping the procedure

Sometimes the procedure may have to be stopped prematurely. This can be if we cannot get a good blood flow or if you have experienced some side effects such as bruising. If this happens, you may need to wait four weeks before you can donate again, and our staff will advise you if this is the case.

5. Nerve damage

Nerve injury during insertion of a needle is very rare. Typical symptoms are of tingling or numbness along the forearm or pain in the arm following insertion of the needle. You should inform a member of staff immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.

We hope most of your questions have been answered.

Please feel free to discuss anything with the staff whenever you donate.