



Giving plasma

What is
plasma, and
how you
can help

What is plasma?

Plasma is the clear, straw-coloured liquid portion of blood that remains after red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets are removed. It contains clotting proteins, antibodies, hormones and water. 55% of human blood is made from plasma – the single largest component.

What is plasma used for?

Plasma can be used to make a variety of life-saving products and medicines. These include:

Fresh Frozen Plasma (FFP): FFP is produced by quickly freezing plasma donations to preserve their clotting factors. It can be used to treat patients with major bleeding or who have low levels of certain clotting factors. FFP can be produced from plasma-only donation, or by separating plasma from a normal whole blood donation.

Cryoprecipitate (Cryo): Cryo is a blood product prepared from fresh frozen plasma. It is used to treat patients with bleeding and liver disorders.

Plasma for Medicine: Plasma can also be frozen and used to make an antibody-rich product called immunoglobulin. This product can be used to help patients with weakened immune systems fight infection, both those born with immune system disorders, and those who have developed them following cancer, cancer treatments or transplants.

Who can give plasma-only donations?

Plasma-only donors must be:

- male. At the moment in Scotland, we only make FFP and Cryo. To do this we need to use male donor plasma as it is less likely to contain antibodies which can lead to a serious transfusion reaction in patients called Transfusion-Related Acute Lung Injury (TRALI).
- at least 60kg
- existing blood donors (must have donated blood at least once before)
- able to donate at Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow or Inverness donor centre every four weeks or so
- willing to spare up to 90 minutes each time they give plasma





What else do I need to know?

Plasma-only donation is a little bit different to giving blood. We use a machine which collects the blood then separates the individual components and returns the red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets back to the donor. The whole process takes no longer than 90 minutes.

All blood groups are suitable for plasma donation, but we are particularly keen to welcome donors with blood group AB. This is because their FFP is 'universal' and can be given to patients of any blood group.

Plasma-only donors must meet the same health criteria as blood donors. We do some extra tests for plasma-only donors, such as protein levels to make sure it's safe for you to continue to donate. We will also test Plasma for Medicine donors for Hepatitis A and Parvovirus B19.

You can give your first plasma donation four weeks after your last blood donation.

What should I do before donating?

Keeping hydrated is the best way to avoid fainting. Make sure you've had plenty to drink before coming to donate, and 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.

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.



Are there any risks associated with giving plasma?

Most of the risks of plasma-only donation are similar to the risks associated with blood donation. Side effects can sometimes include:

- **Bruising and pain:** Most pain and bruising is minor, and symptoms settle quickly with no or simple measures. Fewer than 1 in 50 donations lead to bruising.
- **Feeling faint:** Around 1 in 80 donations lead to donors feeling faint. New blood donors are more likely to be affected, **however** drinking plenty of clear fluids (at least 500ml) before donation significantly reduces the likelihood of fainting.
- **Citrate effect:** Citrate is a blood thinner which occurs naturally in the body. It is added to the donation to prevent blood clotting. A small amount is returned to the donor with their red cells. Most donors feel no side effects, but some may feel tingling around their mouth, fingertips or toes, a metallic taste, or chills. These effects are easily managed by slowing the procedure down.

- Other complications of donation include severe pain, arm inflammation, injury of a nerve or a punctured artery. These are rare, occurring in fewer than 1 in 1,000 donations.
- Sometimes the donation may need to be stopped early. This could be because we can't get a good blood flow, or you're feeling side effects, such as discomfort or bruising.
- If this happens, you may need to wait before you can donate again. Our staff will advise you if this is the case.

If you become at all uncomfortable during your donation, it is vital you let a member of staff know. Our team is trained to take the best possible care of you.

Where can I give plasma?

Aberdeen Blood Donor Centre

Foresterhill Road, Aberdeen AB25 2ZW

Dundee Blood Donor Centre

Level 8, Ninewells Hospital,
Dundee DD1 9SY

Edinburgh Blood Donor Centre

41 Lauriston Place, Edinburgh EH3 9HB

Glasgow Blood Donor Centre

8 Nelson Mandela Place, Glasgow G2 1BT

Inverness Blood Donor Centre

Raigmore Hospital, Inverness IV2 3UJ

I'm interested - how do I sign up?

To find out more, use the contact us form at scotblood.co.uk or email us at nss.snbtSENquiry@nhs.scot. One of our plasma recruitment team will get in touch.

Alternatively, call us 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, on **0345 90 90 999**.

Contact us

t: 0345 90 90 999

e: nss.snbtSENquiry@nhs.scot

w: scotblood.co.uk

 [givebloodforscotland](https://www.facebook.com/givebloodforscotland)

 [@givebloodscot](https://twitter.com/givebloodscot)

 [givebloodscotland](https://www.instagram.com/givebloodscotland)

This publication can be made available in large print, Braille (English only), audio tape and different languages. Please contact nss.equalitydiversity@nhs.scot for further information.

NATL 278 03 Published February 2023