NHS
National Services Scotland

Giving plasma

How your plasma can help patients

SCOTTISH NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE®

GIVE PLASMA

Why we need you

During 2025, the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service are asking people to donate Plasma for Medicine. Plasma for Medicine can be used to treat over 50 diseases, including babies with haemolytic disease – an inherited condition which affects red blood cells.

Currently, we have 800 plasma donors in Scotland and we hope to welcome another 1,000 plasma donors in the next 12 months. You can donate plasma in any of our blood donor centres in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. Please do join us and sign up to give plasma now.

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. Plasma makes up 55% of human blood and is the single largest component. It contains antibodies, also known as immunoglobulins. It also contains water and proteins called clotting factors, which stop bleeding.

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

- Fresh Frozen Plasma (FFP)
- Cryoprecipitate (Cryo)
- Plasma for Medicine (PfM)

How is plasma donated?

Plasma can be donated in two ways:

- as part of a normal whole blood donation, where your gift is later split into its component parts (plasma, platelets, red blood cells and white blood cells) in our labs.
- or at the point of donation ('plasmapheresis'), where a special machine is used to split your components and take only your plasma, returning your platelets, red blood cells and white blood cells immediately.

What are FFP and Cryo?

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.

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

As both therapies are produced from whole blood, no further tests or eligibility criteria apply on top of what is needed for a typical blood donation.

What is Plasma for Medicine?

Plasma can be used to make immunoglobulin therapy. This can be used to help patients with weak immune systems fight infection, both those born with immune disorders, and those who have developed them following cancer, cancer treatments or transplants.

Plasma can also be used to make albumin solution to treat patients with liver disorders and patients needing plasma exchange procedures. Plasma exchange procedures remove patients' plasma, which may contain harmful antibodies or substances, and replace it with fluids like FFP or human albumin solution.

Who can give Plasma for Medicine?

Plasma donors MUST be:

- at least 60kg
- able to donate at Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dundee or Inverness donor centres
- willing to spare 60-90 minutes each time you give plasma

Plasma donors CAN be:

- male or female (Note: New female donors will be booked into a blood donation first).
- any blood type (but we can advise you how your blood type can be best used)

Plasma donors can donate every four weeks. Donors' commitment may vary, but we would love to welcome you 4-6 times per year.

Are there any additional tests for giving Plasma for Medicine?

Yes, a few. All plasma donors need to meet the standard eligibility criteria for blood donation, including the haemoglobin test (where we prick your finger to make sure you have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen) as standard.

However, in addition to this, potential Plasma for Medicine donors will also have their veins assessed. This simply means having a good look at them, it's not invasive in any way.

Before or with your first donation, we will test your blood to make sure it is safe for you to donate. We will count your:

- haematocrit (the percentage of oxygen-carrying red blood cells in your blood)
- platelets (the amount of healing platelet cells you have)
- white blood cells (how many infection-fighting white blood cells you have)

As a Plasma for Medicine donor, your total blood proteins will also be tested at least once a year.

What should I do before donating?

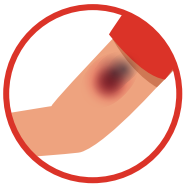
Keeping hydrated is the best way to avoid fainting. **Make sure you've had plenty to drink before coming to donate**, and we'll also give you 500ml of water to drink when you arrive. This might seem a lot, but we know it will make you less likely to feel faint.

Don't donate on an empty stomach - make sure you've eaten well before you come. However, avoid fatty, oily or greasy meals for at least 24 hours before your donation as these can affect the quality of your plasma.

Are there any risks associated with giving plasma?

Most of the risks of plasma donation are similar to the risks associated with blood donation.

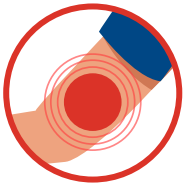
Side effects can sometimes include:



- **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.
- Very rare complications of plasma donation include haemolysis, where red blood cells are broken down while being processed in the apheresis machine, and air embolism, where air enters the donors blood stream. Modern apheresis machines are designed to minimise risks of these rare complications still further.

- 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

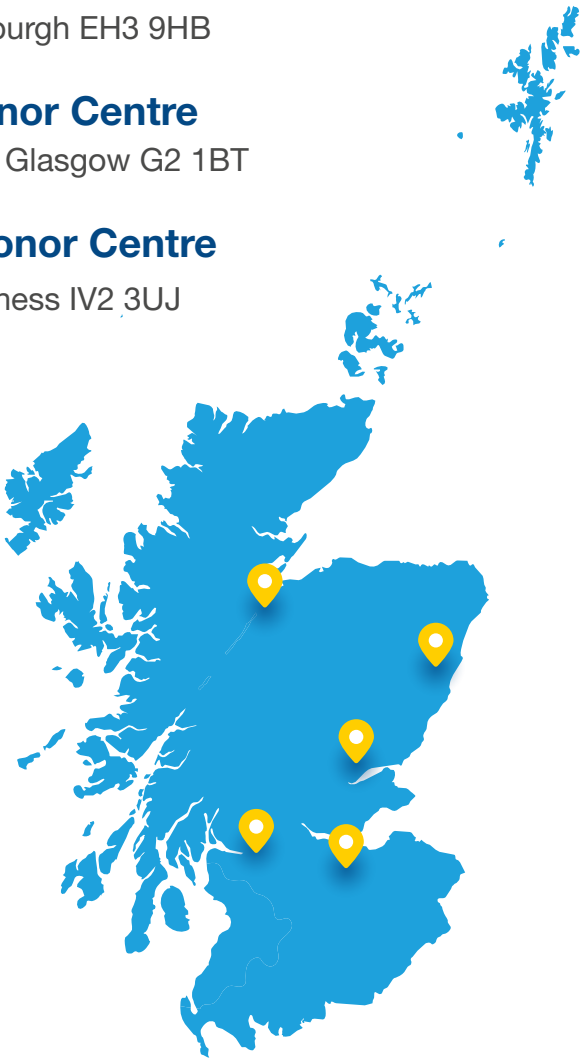
41 Lauriston Place, Edinburgh EH3 9HB

Glasgow Blood Donor Centre

8 Nelson Mandela Place, Glasgow G2 1BT

Inverness Blood Donor Centre

Raigmore Hospital, Inverness IV2 3UJ



I’m interested – what should I do?

To book an appointment, 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, speak to us if you’re at a session, or call us 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, on **0345 90 90 999**.

Contact us

0345 90 90 999

nss.snbtsenquiry@nhs.scot

scotblood.co.uk

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