Convalescent Plasma Donation for COVID-19

If you have recovered from COVID-19, you may be able to donate blood plasma. This is a procedure like donating blood. The procedure is done to collect antibodies that fight the virus SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19. The antibodies can then be given to people who are very sick. This may help them fight the illness.

What is plasma donation?

Plasma is the fluid that makes up a bit more than half of your blood. The rest of your blood is red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. Plasma on its own is a yellow liquid. It has water, salts, enzymes, proteins, and other substances.

Antibodies are proteins in the blood that help fight illness. A person's body makes specific antibodies when they have COVID-19. If you donate plasma after having COVID-19, some of those antibodies can be removed from the plasma and given to people to help them fight the illness.

When you donate plasma, blood is taken from a vein through a thin, flexible tube (catheter). The blood is sent through the tube to a machine. The machine separates the blood cells from the plasma. The blood cells are then returned to you, along with saline solution. This procedure is known as plasmapheresis.

Who can donate?

You may be able to donate plasma for COVID-19 if you:

- Had COVID-19 in the past, confirmed by a lab test, but are fully recovered
- Have had no COVID-19 symptoms for at least 14 days
- Meet the age and weight requirements at your blood donation site
- Are in general good health. This means you should feel well when you donate, even if you have chronic conditions that are being treated.
- Meet any other eligibility requirements at your blood donation site

If you want to donate plasma, you will first go through a screening process. A small amount of your blood is taken. The blood is tested for blood type. Your blood is tested to make sure it has SARS-CoV-2 antibodies. And your blood is tested for infections like hepatitis B and C, and HIV.

Risks and possible complications

All procedures have risks. The risks of plasma donation include:

- Feeling tired or dizzy
- Loss of fluid (dehydration)
- Bruising
- Infection where the needle goes into the skin

Getting ready for the procedure

Follow instructions you get from the blood donation site. You should eat and drink before you donate. You may need to stop taking certain medicines before your donation. This may include aspirin or some kinds of blood pressure medicines.

During the procedure

The procedure takes about 90 minutes. You can read a book or magazine, or listen to music. During the plasma donation process, you will sit or lie down. A catheter is placed in a vein in your arm. The catheter is connected to a machine. Some of your blood goes through the catheter to the machine. The machine separates the plasma from your blood. Your blood cells are then returned to your body along with a little salt solution (saline). You may have a tingling feeling around your mouth and fingers. Or you may have a metallic taste in your mouth. This is caused by a solution used in the machine to make sure the blood doesn't clot in the machine.

After the procedure

Your body will make new plasma quickly, usually in a couple of days. You generally can return to your normal activities after you donate, but don't do strenuous activities right after. Drink fluids to stay hydrated. Rest if you feel tired. Call your healthcare provider if you have any signs of infection where the catheter was in your arm.

Finding out where to donate

You can ask your healthcare provider where to donate plasma for COVID-19. Or you can contact any of these groups:

- Red Cross at redcrossblood.org
- American Association of Blood Banks (AABB) at aabb.org
- Vitalant at vitalant.org