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Plasma Donation



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What is plasma?

Plasma is the liquid part of blood that carries different proteins, such as clotting factors and antibodies. About half of blood is plasma and it is golden in colour. The proteins in plasma have many important functions in the blood such as maintaining blood volume, preventing excessive bleeding and fighting infection.

What happens to my plasma donation?

Patients need plasma products for a wide range of medical and surgical conditions, such as major bleeding, burns, haemophilia and other clotting abnormalities. Plasma is also made into antibody concentrates to give to patients who cannot fight off infection because of immune system problems, genetic disorders or chemotherapy use.

How do you donate plasma?

The plasma donation process is quite different to normal whole blood donation in a number of ways:

- A needle is placed in your arm and you are connected to an apheresis machine.
- Your blood is drawn in the apheresis machine and some of your plasma is removed.
- The rest of your blood is returned to your circulation via the needle.
- The process is repeated in cycles until 650ml plasma is collected. The entire procedure takes about 40 minutes.

Is plasma donation safe?

Like normal blood donation, you can have side effects such as bruising, a painful arm or fainting. Some people also experience symptoms such as tingling around their mouth or spasms in their hands - this is due to a drop in their calcium levels from exposure to the substance (called citrate) that prevents the blood from clotting in the tubing of the machine. Your body will fully replace the plasma you have donated within about 2 days, and you can donate plasma every 2 weeks.

What does it take to become a plasma donor?



You must be between
18 - 65 years old



You must weigh at
least 55kg



You must be healthy on
the day of donation



Your haemoglobin level should
be between 12 - 16g/dl



You can donate if you have
been to a malaria area



You need to have easily
accessible veins

Where and when do plasma donations take place?

The plasma collection machines are only located at specific sites and appointments should be made for donations. Please check out our website (www.wcbs.org.za) to find out where and when you can donate plasma. Due to the length of the procedure, plasma donation will take place until 1½ hours before closing time of the clinic.