Your plasma can help more people than you think

Plasma is the most versatile component of your blood

Blood is composed of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets suspended in a fluid called plasma. Your plasma also contains very important proteins, nutrients and clotting factors which help to prevent or stop bleeding.

An average adult has approximately 5 litres of blood, 3 litres of which is plasma.

What is involved in donating plasma?

Plasma donations are made through a process called apheresis.

As for whole blood donors, plasma donors are still required to complete the Donor Questionnaire, interview and haemoglobin (finger prick) test.

Plasma donation takes approximately 45 minutes.*

Up to 800mL of plasma can be donated in one single plasma donation – which is greater than the amount of plasma donated in 2 whole blood donations.

What happens during the donation?

During a plasma donation, whole blood is drawn from one arm into a sterile kit inside a cell separating machine. The machine separates the blood so that only plasma is collected.

The other blood components (red cells, white cells, and platelets) are returned to the donor via the same arm.

Saline (salt solution) will be infused during and/or at the end of the procedure for safety reasons.

By giving time* every few weeks, you can help us to improve the quality of life of many patients and their families.

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Your commitment to regular plasma donation is highly valued.

Are there any side effects from plasma donation?

A small amount of anticoagulant (anti-clotting agent) is mixed with each withdrawal of blood to prevent clotting in the tubing and some of this is returned to the donor with the cellular (non-plasma) components. Sometimes this can cause a slight tingling sensation around the lips and nose. This is a mild reaction to the anticoagulant and subsides after the procedure is completed.

The procedure can be stopped early if any reaction causes concern. Throughout your donation, you will be under the supervision of a trained nurse.

How often can a plasma donation be given?

Because your red cells are returned to you when you give a plasma donation, you are able to donate as often as every 2 weeks.

You are under no obligation to continue as a plasma donor and can return to donating whole blood at any time.

How do I become a plasma donor?

- First time plasma donors must have given at least 1 whole blood donation in the last 2 years without complication.
- Your selection as a plasma donor is dependent on your availability, the suitability of your veins and your haemoglobin level.
- Males must be aged between 18-70 years and females must be aged between 20-70 years.
- You must weigh 50kg or more.
- You must meet the eligibility requirements covered by the Donor Questionnaire.
- Have plenty of liquid in the 24 hours before donation, especially in warmer weather, and drink 3 good-sized glasses of water/juice in the 3 hours before visiting the donor centre.

Your donation can help make someone’s life better.

James Harrison
Australian record holder

James, the Australian record holder for most blood donations, has made over 900 donations. He visits the Blood Service every fortnight and donates plasma. James’ plasma is specifically useful for the immunoglobulin which prevents Rh(D) negative women developing Rh(D) antibodies during pregnancy, which may harm their unborn child.

His multiple donations have contributed to more than 1 million doses of Rh(D) immunoglobulin including, several years ago, treatment for his own daughter during her pregnancy.

“Pretty much everybody in the community has received something from the Blood Service,” says James. “So please, take the time and give something back.”