Australian Red Cross Lifeblood

The power of plasma

Unlock the life-giving potential in your blood

Plasma is a powerful part of your blood that can be used in 18 life-giving ways. It's transformative for the thousands of people it helps every day but, because that number is constantly growing, we always need new donors to give enough plasma for everyone who needs it.

Can I donate?

To do the most good, every donation needs to be as safe as possible for the donor and the person receiving it. You should be good to give plasma if:

- you're aged 18–75 if it's your first time (you can be older than 75 if you've donated in Australia before)
- you feel fit and healthy, and don't have a cold, flu or any other illness
- you weigh at least 50 kg
- you've got your photo ID, donor card or the donate blood app
- you've had plenty to eat and drink in the 24 hours before your donation
- you've had 750 mL (3 large glasses) of fluids in the 3 hours before your donation
- you've completed the Donor Questionnaire and met any eligibility criteria, and
- you've been assessed by our trained staff at the donor centre (they'll check you have suitable veins and haemoglobin levels).

There are some cases where we may have to re-schedule. Like, if you take certain medication, you're pregnant, or you've had a tattoo in the past four months.

Unsure if you can give plasma? Find out more at donateblood.com.au or give us a call on 13 14 95

What happens on the day?

Don't worry, you're in safe hands.

But so you know what to expect, here's a walk-through of what's involved:

1. When you arrive, you'll need to complete our Donor Questionnaire. It's totally confidential and designed to protect you and the person who receives your plasma.
2. We'll then check your haemoglobin — a protein that carries oxygen around your body and contains iron. We'll also take your pulse and blood pressure, and if it's your first time we'll note your height and weight.
3. Giving plasma is a lot like giving blood, but there are a few extra steps. Our machine draws your blood through a (brand new) needle and tube system. Your blood then goes into a machine which separates out the plasma – pretty incredible, right?
4. Once the machine has collected your plasma, it returns your blood through the same needle, along with some saline (salt solution) to help replace the plasma you've given.
5. The donation itself takes about 45 minutes, plus an extra 20 to recover. Sit back in our comfy couch and make the most of our free Wi-Fi, listen to music or get stuck into a good book.

Straight after you donate

You'll have done something genuinely life-saving and we hope you'll be feeling great about it. However, it's really important to relax, refresh and follow our advice.

- Rest in the chair for five minutes and, when you're ready, sit up with your legs dangling over the edge.
- Take a seat in our refreshments area. It's important to rehydrate and have something to eat, so help yourself to a cool drink and a savoury snack.
- You'll need to stay at the donor centre for at least 20 minutes (even if you feel fine). It's a great time to catch up on some reading, listen to music, or make the most of our free Wi-Fi.

An introduction to plasma donation

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After you've left the donor centre

There is a chance that you'll get a bruise or feel faint after your donation. To help stop this from happening, be sure to follow the advice below.

For the next 2 hours:

- keep the bandage on your arm, and
- stay hydrated.

For at least 8 hours:

- don't do any heavy lifting
- drink plenty of water (at least another three large glasses)
- eat regular meals
- don't stand up for long periods
- stay cool — avoid hot showers, sitting or standing in the direct sun and choose cold drinks rather than hot drinks, and
- don't drink alcohol.

For at least 12 hours

Avoid strenuous exercise (e.g. riding, jogging, or going to the gym) or hazardous activities, including activities or jobs where public safety may be affected. You should check any employment or safety requirements you have. If unsure, please ask us at your interview.

Your body is brilliant at replacing what you give, so you should have all your blood volume replenished in just a day or two.

Good to know ...

What do we test for?

We work hard to protect the people receiving your plasma and test every donation for blood type as well as HIV, and hepatitis B and C.

If this is your first time donating plasma, we'll also test for human t-lymphotropic virus (HTLV) and syphilis.

Remember, we're testing to protect the people who receive your plasma. We'll tell you if we find anything, but for your personal health, you need to get checked by a doctor.

How much plasma will I give?

This all depends on your height and weight, but 800 mL is the very most. Because we can return your red blood cells, there's less impact on your haemoglobin and iron levels when you give plasma than when you give blood. That means you can donate as often as every two weeks.

What does it feel like?

Most donors say they feel fine donating plasma — and pretty chuffed knowing that it can be made into vital life-giving treatments.

You might feel a little cold when we return your red cells because of the saline we use to replace your blood volume. It's nothing to worry about and we have plenty of warm blankets on hand to keep you cosy.

To help your donation go smoothly, we use anticoagulant — an anti-clotting agent that keeps blood flowing through the tubes in our machines. When we return your red cells (and the other non-plasma blood components), you'll receive a little of this anticoagulant too. Sometimes it can cause a metallic taste, tingling around your mouth and tongue and, less often, tingling in your hands or feet.

As with every kind of donation, a trained staff member will be there to keep an eye on you. If you feel uncomfortable or unwell at any time, let them know straight away and they'll look after you.

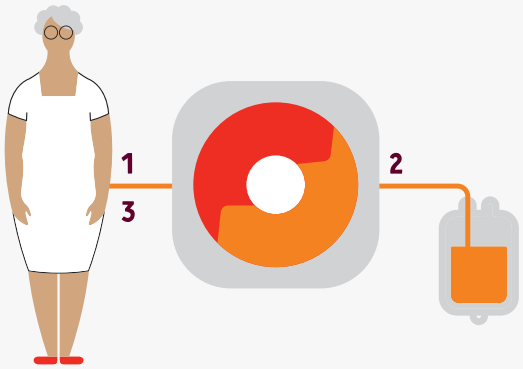
Where does my plasma go?

Plasma can be used in 18 life-giving ways. So, when you donate you can know that you're genuinely helping.

- Protect kids against chickenpox
- Fight against tetanus infection
- Prevent clots in patients with rare blood disorders
- Help stop critical bleeding
- Treat complications from liver disease
- Treat brain disorders
- Protect against tetanus
- Fight infection during bone marrow transplants
- Protect people exposed to hepatitis B
- Protect people with immune deficiencies
- Protect newborns against Rh disease
- Treat patients with haemophilia B
- Support patients with severe kidney diseases
- Help during complex heart surgery
- Protect people against measles
- Prevent deep vein thrombosis in patients with rare blood disorders
- Treat complications from severe burns
- Treat rare inherited blood disorders

How it works:

1. Our machine draws blood from your arm.
2. It separates and collects the (powerful) plasma in your blood.
3. The rest of your blood is returned through the same needle.



Ready to unlock the power?

To find out where you can donate plasma, or for more info on its life-giving power, go to donateblood.com.au/learn/plasma or call us on 13 14 95