

Therapeutic Apheresis

Your blood has:

- › Red cells, which carry oxygen
- › White cells, which fight infection
- › Platelets, which help stop bleeding
- › Plasma (the liquid part of your blood), containing proteins, antibodies (finds and removes dangerous microorganisms and chemicals from the body), and clotting factors (helps blood to thicken and stop bleeding)

What is therapeutic apheresis?

Therapeutic means a treatment, therapy, or drug. Apheresis (a-fe-ree-sis) is the process of:

- › removing blood from your body.
- › filtering (removing) something out of the blood.
- › putting the filtered blood back into your body.

It has different names depending on what is being filtered from the blood.

The most common types of therapeutic apheresis are:

- › Leukapheresis, which removes white cells
- › Plateletpheresis, which removes platelets
- › Plasmapheresis, which removes plasma

Other names include therapeutic plasma exchange (TPE), white blood cell reduction, and red blood cell exchange.

How is apheresis done?

- Your blood is removed through an intravenous (IV) needle inserted in your arm. The IV is attached to a tube that goes into a special machine. The machine removes the damaged parts of your blood. It then returns the good parts to your bloodstream.
- The procedure usually takes 2 to 4 hours.
- This treatment is done by nurses with special training on the Apheresis Unit in the Medical Day Unit. This is on the 4th floor of the QEII, Victoria General site.

How do I get ready for treatment?

- **Do not take blood pressure pills before your appointment.** You may take all of your other medications as usual.
- You can eat and drink as usual.
- The hematologist (a doctor that specializes in blood diseases) will explain the procedure to you. You will be asked to sign a consent form. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.
- We will check your blood pressure, pulse, height, and weight.

What will happen at my appointment?

- You may have a needle placed in each arm. One needle will remove your blood. The other needle will return your blood back to your body.
- If your veins are small, the hemotologist will place a special IV catheter (tube) in your neck, chest, or groin. The tube will go into a large vein that leads to your heart. The tube will stay in place until all of your treatments are done.
- The machine will spin your blood to separate it into different parts. Depending on the type of apheresis you need, the machine will collect either your white cells, platelets, or plasma and return the rest of your blood to you. You will get fluids through your IV to replace the plasma you lose.

- You may have a slight reaction to the solution used to keep your blood from clotting during the treatment. One of the symptoms of this reaction is tingling around your mouth, which can spread to your chest and arms.
 - › **It is important to tell the nurse if you have any tingling, even if it is only a little bit.** They can help treat this reaction during the treatment.
 - › If your symptoms are not treated, they can lead to nausea (upset stomach), vomiting (throwing up), and severe (very bad) cramping.
- Tell your nurse if you feel weak, dizzy, or different than when you started the treatment. They will closely watch you and how you respond to the treatment.

What will happen after the treatment?

- If you are an outpatient (not admitted to the hospital), you should have someone else drive you home. This is especially important for the first few treatments, until you know how you respond.
- If the veins in your arms were used for the treatment, check the needle sites for bleeding and/or swelling. If the sites are bruised or swollen, apply ice wrapped in a cloth for 15 minutes.
- If you are bleeding, apply pressure to the site for 5 minutes.
- Avoid strenuous (hard) exercise for 24 hours (1 day).
- **Do not remove the bandage(s) for 6 hours. Keep it dry.**
- **Do not smoke for 1 to 2 hours after your treatment.**
- You can eat as usual. Drink plenty of fluids.
- It is normal to feel tired after your treatment. Rest as needed.
- Lie down if you feel dizzy or faint.

If you have any of the following symptoms, go to the nearest Emergency Department right away:

- › **Bleeding that does not stop**
- › **Blood in your pee or poop**
- › **Nosebleeds**
- › **Headaches**
- › **Confusion**

Notes:

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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www.nshealth.ca

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.