



Convalescent Plasma

What is Plasma?

Plasma is a yellow liquid that carries red cells, white cells and platelets within the blood vessels around the body. It also contains proteins, hormones, and nutrients vital for maintaining a healthy body. Blood from donors is separated into red cells, platelets and plasma. The plasma is quickly frozen to make Fresh Frozen Plasma, often called FFP.

What is convalescent plasma (CP)?

FFP is a blood component (plasma) that is collected frozen and stored. Convalescent plasma is a term used to describe plasma which is specifically collected from individuals who have recovered from an infection and may contain antibodies to the virus that caused the disease. In the case of COVID-19, CP is collected from volunteers who have recovered from the virus, and contains antibodies thought to help fight COVID-19. Although CP has been used to treat other viral infections in the past, its effectiveness against COVID-19 is still being studied.

Risks associated with CP

The risk that CP will cause severe harm or even death is very low; however, there are associated risks and minor to severe problems can occur. The risks fall into four main categories:

1. Identification; it is vitally important to make sure **you are correctly identified at each stage of the transfusion process.**

One of the most important checks for a safe transfusion is to make sure you get the right component. Therefore, it is essential that you wear an identification band correctly stating your details. You can help reduce the small risk of being given the wrong one by asking your healthcare professional to check that it is the right unit for you.

2. Reactions; you will be observed before during and after your transfusion. If you feel unwell during or after it you should inform your healthcare professional immediately. Some people may develop a temperature, rash, chills or breathing difficulties. These reactions are usually mild and easily treated with medication or by slowing or stopping the transfusion. Severe reactions are extremely rare. If they do occur staff are trained to recognise and treat them.
3. Infection; although there is no evidence of transmission of coronavirus from blood components, such as plasma, there remains a remote chance that there may be coronavirus present. The CP are screened for a number of infections which can be transmitted through blood, but it is not practical or even possible to screen all donations for all infections. Therefore there will always be a small risk associated with having a transfusion.
4. Concerns specific to you; this would include any religious, personal or health-based objections to blood transfusions that you have.

How will a transfusion of CP be given and how will I feel?

The CP is thawed in the laboratory before being sent to the ward. It is given via a tube directly into a vein. Most people do not feel anything unusual during the transfusion. Each unit of CP contains 200 – 300ml and takes around 60 minutes to transfuse. You may be given more than one unit as part of your treatment.

What if I have worries or concerns about receiving a transfusion?

If you are worried or have any questions, please talk to your healthcare professional. Many hospitals have a dedicated Hospital Transfusion Team and if appropriate, they may be able to come and discuss your concerns with you.

Additional sources of Information

Further information on blood transfusion is available in other patient information leaflets. These can be accessed at: <https://portal.welsh-blood.org.uk/bht/>

If you are interested in finding out more about blood and have access to the internet, you may find the following websites useful:

Welsh Blood Service

www.welshblood.org.uk

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/conditions/blood-transfusion

UK Transfusion Services

www.transfusionguidelines.org.uk

NHS Blood and Transplant

www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/what-we-do/blood-transfusion/

Note that as a precautionary measure to reduce the risk of transmitting vCJD, people who have received a blood transfusion since 1980 are not currently able to donate blood.

Reference

In order to plan for future blood demands, information about which patients receive blood needs to be gathered. We may ask a hospital or GP to provide limited medical information on a sample of patients who have received blood transfusions.

Any information that is passed on to WBS is held securely, with the rights of these patients protected under data protection legislation.

A print-friendly version of this leaflet can be accessed at:

<https://portal.welsh-blood.org.uk/bht/>

Healthcare Professionals – additional copies of this leaflet can be ordered at:

<https://wbs-intranet.cymru.nhs.uk/bht/leaflet-order-form>

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