

COVID Conquerors Needed: Convalescent Plasma Donation 101

October 8, 2020

Donating potentially life-saving convalescent plasma is as easy a process as donating blood, but there are some limitations on who can donate, what's needed to donate, and how often donations can be made.

Our area and nation are experiencing a significant shortage, so we hope that anyone who is eligible will consider giving this precious gift to others in the to help fight this disease.

Here's what you need to know:

Who can donate convalescent plasma?

People who have recovered from COVID-19 and have been symptom-free (no fever, respiratory issues, or irregularities with taste and smell, for example) for at least 14 days should consider donating plasma, which could help save lives.

Beyond being recovered from COVID-19, plasma donors must also meet the requirements for regular blood donation (<https://thebloodconnection.org/important-donor-information/>):

- At least 17 years old (or 16 with parental consent) and weighing at least 110 pounds
- In general, good health and feeling well
- Any chronic conditions must be well-managed

Those who believe they had COVID-19 but were never tested can also help by making a blood donation. If COVID antibodies are found, the convalescent plasma in that donation can be used for COVID treatment. Donors will be notified of their antibody test results within seven business days of donation.

How soon after you recover from COVID-19 can you donate?

Donors must have complete resolution of COVID symptoms and remain asymptomatic for at least 14 days before donating. Anyone who has recovered from COVID, no matter how long ago is eligible to donate convalescent plasma.

What do I need to donate convalescent plasma?

The Blood Connection (TBC) requires proof of a positive COVID test result (either paper test result, a letter from DHEC, a test result online through MyChart or even a screen shot) before accepting convalescent plasma donations.

Those who were never diagnosed or have proof of a positive test result, can still help by donating blood. If COVID antibodies are found, TBC can collect the convalescent plasma from this blood donation. Donors will be notified of their antibody test results within seven business days of donation, and donors found to have COVID antibodies can return 14 days later to make a more substantial plasma donation.

Do I need to have a negative COVID-19 test result before I can donate?

The Blood Connection does not require a negative test result to donate convalescent plasma. However, donors must have complete resolution of COVID symptoms and remain asymptomatic for at least 14 days before donating. Anyone who has recovered from COVID, no matter how long ago is eligible to donate convalescent plasma.

How much plasma is taken in one session?

The amount of plasma that can be safely donated in one session depends on several factors, including your size and red blood cell count, but The Blood Connection's equipment calculates this at donation to ensure your safety and well-being.

How many people will my plasma help?

Your convalescent plasma donation can treat up to 4 people, while a regular blood donation found to have COVID antibodies will result in one treatment. Either type of donation can play a key role in saving lives.

Can I donate convalescent plasma anywhere?

Collecting convalescent plasma requires specialized medical equipment, but, thanks to a CARES Act grant, all TBC facilities and bloodmobiles are able to accept convalescent plasma donations.

Can I donate if I think I've had COVID-19 but have never been tested?

Yes! Those who believe they had COVID-19 but were never tested can also help by donating blood. If COVID antibodies are found, TBC will collect the convalescent plasma from this blood donation. Donors will be notified of their antibody test results within seven days of donation, giving those found to have the antibodies a chance to return in 14 days to make a more substantial convalescent plasma donation.

Do I need to make an appointment to donate?

To ensure the availability of equipment, we require an appointment for convalescent plasma donation. Same-day appointments are available, and we will be scheduling plasma drives at our donation facilities and bloodmobile units at convenient locations across the Upstate throughout the month of October and beyond. While we encourage an appointment to save time and ensure availability, we do accept walk-ins for blood donations.

How do I sign up?

To make an appointment to donate, please call The Blood Connection at 864-751-1168 or visit www.postive2positive.com.

What's involved in the process of donating plasma?

When you go in to make your donation, you will be asked a series of screening questions and have your temperature taken. The Blood Connection technicians will ask to see proof for your positive diagnosis (paper, screen shot, MyChart, etc.). You will then be comfortably seated, safely distanced from other donors. Blood will be drawn from your arm and sent through a very specialized machine that collects plasma and safely and comfortably returns your red cells back to you.

Blood donation follows a similar process but does not require proof of a COVID diagnosis and takes less time.

What's involved with antibody testing?

TBC tests all donations for antibodies. Regular blood donations that test positive for COVID antibodies, may be used for convalescent plasma. All blood donors will be notified of their antibody test result within seven business days of donating.

How long does it take?

The plasma collection itself takes a little less than an hour. Along with the screening questions and set-up, you should expect to be there for approximately 90 minutes.

Regular blood donation takes about 1 hour.

How should I prepare for plasma donation?

There is really no preparation needed, but it is beneficial to be sure that you are well hydrated and have eaten prior to your donation time.

Can I direct my donation to a specific person or hospital?

Unfortunately, we are not able to earmark donations for any specific person or medical facility.

Where will my plasma go after it is donated?

Following your donation, your plasma will be screened and typed and sent to a medical facility for patient use.

Will I be notified of who used it or where?

Due to health privacy concerns, we are unable to tell donors where their plasma was or will be used. However, since TBC is the sole provider of blood and plasma products to all local medical facilities, your donation will help your friends, neighbors, and loved ones.



How often can you donate?

Eligible individuals can donate COVID-19 convalescent plasma once every 14 days, with a maximum frequency of 4 times within eight weeks.

Given the need and the value of the help only you can give, we hope that donors will consider making multiple donations.

How long are antibodies active in my system following COVID diagnosis?

It is unclear how long immunity lasts within someone who has recovered from the virus, but anyone who has recovered since the beginning of the pandemic may still have antibodies that could be used to aid in the treatment of current COVID patients.

Are the bloodmobiles safe and are social distancing protocols followed?

Health and safety are of paramount importance to The Blood Connection. As a mobile medical facility, each of our bloodmobiles follows stringent safety protocols just as our donor centers do. Further, all drives will observe safe distancing, including the use of masks.