

Convalescent Plasma as a COVID-19 Treatment

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When people get sick, their immune systems generate antibodies to help fight the disease. These antibodies can be found in their blood plasma – the liquid component of blood that suspends blood cells.

Plasma is collected through blood donation, tested for safety, and sent to hospitals for use. The end product, convalescent plasma, can be transfused into others diagnosed with the same illness, boosting the recipient's immune system and spurring it on to generate more of its own antibodies to fight the disease.

While convalescent plasma has been used to treat a number of illnesses, recently it has been shown to be an effective treatment for certain COVID-19 patients.

This plasma can only be obtained through donations from those who have recovered from COVID-19, giving those who've beaten this disease a chance to turn a positive test result into a positive outcome for those who might otherwise be lost to the pandemic. Even those who may have had COVID but were asymptomatic or never diagnosed can help by making a blood donation. If the antibodies are present, convalescent plasma can be collected from this donation.

Safety and Efficacy

A Mayo Clinic study of more than 35,000 COVID-19 patients treated with convalescent plasma suggests that it can significantly improve the recovery rate and decrease deaths in patients with COVID-19, especially those requiring hospitalization or breathing support, like ventilators.

Based on these studies, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for convalescent plasma as a therapeutic treatment for severe cases of COVID-19.

Currently, convalescent plasma, along with Remdesivir and steroids, is among the most effective treatments available for more extreme cases of COVID-19.

Use and Need

Convalescent plasma has been in use among COVID patients for several months, giving many a second chance and helping to drive full recoveries in others.

However, the need for plasma remains very high across the country, especially here in the Upstate. As early as April, FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn began encouraging Americans



recovering from COVID to donate plasma, a request echoed by multiple health care groups and agencies over the past several months.

Collection and Dosage

Plasma donation is as simple and easy as donating blood and takes less than 90 minutes from start-to-finish. It requires special equipment, so not all blood donation sites are able to perform plasma collection. However, all sites can collect routine blood donations, which are always needed and appreciated.

The good news is that one plasma donation can be used to treat up four COVID patients, possibly helping to save multiple lives.

According to many leading medical experts, donating plasma is one of our best means to combat the virus, taking back a portion of our power from an illness that has had such a devastating effect on our country and the world.