



# Plasma Exchange

*Treatment for your condition*

**This handout explains how a plasma exchange is done, the risks of the procedure, and what symptoms to watch for and report during the exchange.**

Your doctor has advised you to have one or more *plasma exchange* procedures as part of the treatment for your condition. Plasma is the liquid part of blood.

You will be asked to sign a consent form before this procedure is done.

## About the Procedure

In a plasma exchange procedure:

- Blood is drawn from a vein in your arm and processed by an *apheresis machine* (blood cell separator). This machine separates your plasma from the rest of your blood. An *anticoagulant* is added to your blood to keep it from clotting.
- The plasma is discarded.
- The remaining portion of the blood is put back into you, along with other fluids to replace the plasma. This replacement fluid may be normal *saline* (salt water) solution, 5% human serum albumin, and/or fresh frozen plasma. Red blood cells may also be used in a process called *blood prime*. In a blood prime, red blood cells that match your red blood cells are used to fill the apheresis machine before you are connected to it. This is done only for some children and for adults who have very low red blood counts.

## Possible Risks

- You may have some discomfort and bruises from the needle sticks.
- You may also have a minor surgical procedure to place a tube-like device (either a *shunt* or *catheter*) into your chest or neck, if better blood flow is needed.
- Rarely, your blood may clot too much or the machine might not work correctly. If this happens, the procedure might have to be stopped and you may lose up to a ½ pint of blood.

## Questions?

Call 206-598-7688

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Neurology Clinic:  
206-598-7688

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- Very rarely, the use of albumin may cause an allergic reaction.
- The use of fresh frozen plasma may cause an allergic reaction.
- Very rarely, fresh frozen plasma may transmit hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV.

Please talk with your health care provider if you would like more information about any of these possible risks.

## Symptoms

Tell your nurse right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Sour taste in your mouth (the medicines you are given may cause this)
- Tingling in your hands or around your lips

Most times, these symptoms can be treated quickly by giving fluid that contains calcium or by slowing the procedure.