



**American
Red Cross**

Blood Services
Great Lakes Region



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Platelet Apheresis

By donating your platelets through **platelet apheresis (ay-fer-ee-sis)**, you give a very special gift of life.

Most patients undergoing a bone marrow transplant, surgery, chemotherapy, radiation treatment or organ transplant need platelets in order to survive. In fact, doctors are finding that platelets play a vital role in more and more new therapies.

With just a five-day storage life, platelet donations are delivered quickly to the patients who need them. Platelet donors have the satisfaction of knowing that their donation will be saving a life within just a few days.

What is Platelet Apheresis?

Until recently, the only way to collect enough platelets for a single transfusion was to take blood donations from 5 to 10 donors, separate the platelets from the other blood cells, and combine the platelets to obtain a large enough quantity for transfusion.

Today, sophisticated medical equipment — blood cell separators — can collect enough platelets for transfusion from a single donor. Using a technique called apheresis, blood is drawn from the donor's vein into an apheresis instrument, which separates the blood into separate portions by centrifugation. By appropriately adjusting the instrument, a selected portion of the blood, such as the platelets, can be recovered, while the rest of the blood is returned to the donor either into the same vein or into a vein in the other arm.

This process takes more time than whole blood donation, but the percentage of platelets is much greater. It is a simple, safe process — very much like regular blood donation. In fact, your body starts replenishing platelets immediately after your donation. Within 48 hours, your body's platelets should be completely replenished.

Why Are Platelets Needed?

Blood is made of four components: platelets, plasma, red blood cells and white blood cells. The platelet component is necessary to control bleeding. Patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments, for example, are unable to produce enough platelets. Without platelet transfusion, life-threatening hemorrhages could result.

What's Involved

By using a special method called apheresis, whole blood is separated into components, and the platelets are removed. Specially trained Red Cross staff conduct the procedure while you relax, watch TV or read. The entire process takes about two hours.

Who Can Donate?

You can continue to give whole blood in addition to platelets. The same good health requirements for a whole blood donor apply to platelet donors.

And, just like whole blood donation, donating platelets is safe. In accordance with our

commitment to insure the highest level of safety, all needles and containers are sterile, used only once, and then carefully discarded. Because platelets are quickly replenished by your body, you can donate platelets as frequently as every 48 hours, but no more than 24 times a year. Additional restrictions vary, however, depending on the donation center, type of procedure used, and your donation history.