Therapeutic Apheresis
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What is apheresis?
Apheresis (a-fer-ee-sis) means “to take away”. This is the name for a type of treatment that is very helpful for a number of conditions.

Blood leaves your body through a tube and goes into a special machine. The machine “takes away” the undesirable or “bad” products and returns the remaining “good” products to your blood stream. It usually takes 2-4 hours.

This treatment is done in the Medical Day Unit, 4th floor, Victoria General site.

Your blood has:
• Red cells, which carry oxygen.
• White cells, which fight infection.
• Platelets, which help stop bleeding.
• Plasma, which is the liquid part of your blood. It contains proteins, antibodies, and clotting factors.

The most common types of therapeutic apheresis treatments are:
• Plasmapheresis which removes plasma.
• Plateletpheresis which removes platelets.
• Leukapheresis which removes white cells.
Getting ready on the day of the apheresis treatment:

• **Do not take your blood pressure pills** before apheresis.

• Eat your usual meals.

• Your doctor will explain apheresis to you. You will be asked to sign a consent form. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

• Your blood pressure, pulse, height, and weight will be taken.
How is apheresis done?

• A needle may be placed in each arm. One needle removes blood and the other needle is used to give your “good” blood back to your body. If your veins are small, the doctor will place a small intravenous catheter (tube) in the neck or chest area or in the groin of your leg. This is left in place until all of your treatments are over.

• The machine separates your blood into the different parts through a spinning motion. The plasma is collected and the rest of your blood is returned back to you. You will get a fluid to replace the plasma you lose.

• A person may have a slight reaction to the solution used to keep his/her blood from clotting during the treatment. One of the symptoms of this reaction is tingling around the mouth, which can spread to the chest and arms. **It is important to let the nurse know if you have any tingling, even if it is only slight.** Your nurse can take steps to treat these symptoms.

• The nurse will closely watch you and your response to the treatment.

• Tell the nurse if you feel “different”, weak, dizzy, or “funny”.
After the apheresis treatment:

• If your arm veins were used for the treatment, check the needle sites for bleeding and/or swelling. Apply ice wrapped in a cloth to a bruised or swollen site for 15 minutes. If more bleeding happens, apply pressure to the site for 5 minutes.

• If you are an out-patient, someone else must drive you home.

• Do not smoke for 1-2 hours after your treatment.

• Do not drink hot liquids for 2 hours after your treatment.

• Do not remove the bandage for 6 hours. Keep it dry.

• Eat your regular meals. Drink plenty of fluids.

• Avoid strenuous (hard) exercise for 24 hours.

• Lie down if you feel dizzy or faint.

• It is OK to feel tired after your treatment. We encourage you to rest.

• Go to your Emergency Department if these symptoms persist (don’t go away) or bother you.

If you have any questions, please ask. We are here to help you.
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