

Apheresis

What is therapeutic apheresis?

Therapeutic apheresis is a general term used for treatments that remove harmful proteins, chemicals or cells in the blood which add to disease. The following is a list of different types of treatments that we offer in the apheresis unit.

- **Plasma Exchange** - A procedure involving the separation and removal of the plasma from your blood in order to remove a harmful proteins in the plasma. The red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets are returned to you, along with a suggested replacement fluid such as albumin or plasma.
- **Red blood cell exchange** -The red cells are separated from the rest of your blood, removed and replaced with red cells from blood donated by blood donors.
- **White blood cell depletion** -The white cells are separated from the rest of your blood and removed. The red blood cells, plasma and platelets are returned to you.
- **Platelet depletion** -The platelets are separated from the rest of your blood and removed. The red blood cells, plasma and white blood cells are returned to you.

What should you expect the day of apheresis?

- Please register at patient registration prior to coming to the Apheresis Unit. We are located in Section B, Level 4.
- Remember to wear comfortable clothing including a shirt that allows access to your arms or to your apheresis catheter.
- Bring your own food and drinks. You may eat throughout the procedure.
- We will ask you to use the bathroom prior to your procedure as once you are hooked up to the machine you will not be able to use the bathroom.
- There are TV's available for each patient.

What should I expect during a therapeutic apheresis?

- For the procedure, you will need two intravenous (IV) needles inserted.
- One needle will be used to remove your blood from you and the other IV will be used to return your blood to you. This can be done by putting an intravenous needle in each arm or by using a special apheresis catheter that has two lumens or ports.
- The nurse will assess your arms for appropriate veins to use. Your arm must be kept very still during the procedure.

Are there side effects?

An anticoagulant is given during the procedure, and some patients may feel:

- Tingling around the lips, or a pins and needles feeling in the fingers or toes. It is important to tell the nurse if this happens.
- Dizzy, lightheaded or cold during the procedure.
- Tired after a procedure, but most are able to continue routine daily activities.

You may want a family member, or friend to bring you to and from your procedure.

How long does a procedure take?

The length of each procedure varies depending on what your doctor has ordered for you. An average procedure lasts 2 to 3 hours.