

Platelet Donations

What is apheresis?

Apheresis is the process by which platelets and other specific blood components (red cells or plasma) are collected from a donor. The word “apheresis” is derived from the Greek word aphaeresis meaning “to take away.” This process is accomplished by using a machine called a cell separator. Blood is drawn from the donor and the platelets, or another blood component, are collected by the cell separator and the remaining components of the blood are returned to the donor during the donation. Each apheresis donation procedure takes about one-and-one-half to two hours. Donors can watch movies or relax during the donation.

What are platelets and how are they used?

Platelets are tiny, colorless, disc-shaped particles circulating in the blood, and they are essential for normal blood clotting. Platelets are critically important to the survival of many patients with clotting problems (aplastic anemia, leukemia) or cancer, and patients who will undergo organ transplants or major surgeries like heart bypass grafts. Platelets can only be stored for five days after being collected. Maintaining an adequate supply of this lifesaving, perishable product is an ongoing challenge.

How often can I give platelets?

Every 7 days up to 24 apheresis donations can be made in a year. Some apheresis donations can generate two or three adult-sized **platelet transfusion** doses from one donation!