



Health Matters

Give Plasma. Save Lives.

(NAPS)—As Alice Drennon entered her 50s, she started experiencing a lot of severe infections. After missing 122 days of work in one year and numerous medical visits and blood tests, she learned, at age 54, she had a rare genetic disease called common variable immune deficiency (CVID).

“My antibodies had oddly disappeared,” said Drennon. “I knew I had to live a ‘new normal’ life or wait for death to come knocking at my door.”

Living for Drennon means getting IVIG plasma infusions every 28 days for 4 to 5 hours. The IVIG is made from antibodies called immunoglobulins that help her body fight off infections. The infusions partially replace the antibodies her body should be making, but they need to be replenished every month. She will need them for the rest of her life.

Today, Drennon is living a full life, including volunteering at her local plasma center.

“I thank each donor when they come to our center,” she says. “They’re amazed to see an actual patient, which lets them put a face on a plasma recipient.”

Why give plasma?

People give plasma for different reasons. One reason is that it helps save lives of people such as Drennon. For many people with rare diseases and chronic conditions, plasma-based therapies are the only way to treat their condition or disease.

What happens during the donation?

From check-in to recovery, giving plasma for the first time can take up to 2 hours. After that, it takes anywhere from 1 to 1½ hours.

- **Check-in:** When you arrive at a plasma center, you will check in at the front desk. You will need to show a valid photo ID, proof of address, and proof of Social Security.
- **Screening:** Every time you donate, you will receive a health screening. This ensures that you are eligible to donate and are in good health. During the screening, you will give a blood sample and get your vital signs checked, including your blood pressure, pulse, and temperature.
- **Physical exam:** The first time you give plasma, you will receive a confidential limited physical exam given by a trained medical specialist. You will receive a physical exam at least annually to make sure you stay in good health.
- **Donation:** After approval, plasma center staff will set you up at a plasmapheresis machine. This is a specialized medical device that collects whole blood from a vein in your arm. It separates out the plasma and returns the remaining blood components to your body. Your blood cells (red and white) and platelets are returned to your body via the machine. During the donation, you are usually given saline



Alice Drennon is a volunteer at her local plasma center.

to help you maintain your circulation. Sometimes you may receive oral fluids instead. The entire process takes about an hour. Plasma center staff will monitor the process to be sure you are safe and comfortable.

- **Recovery:** The last step is recovery. As a safety precaution, plan to stay at the plasma center for about 10 to 15 minutes after you have given plasma to be sure you begin to rehydrate and are feeling well enough to travel home.

Plasma center staff will also show you how to care for your bandage and give you a few other at-home instructions. You should continue to drink water and eat a small meal shortly after giving plasma to restore your energy.

How often can I donate?

Plasma regenerates quickly. With proper hydration, your blood volume returns to normal within 48 hours. Because of this, you can give plasma twice in any 7-day period, but no more than once in a 48-hour period.

You can typically schedule a return visit while you are at the plasma center. Many people choose to set up a series of visits. Repeat, committed visits are the best way to support the growing need for plasma.

Your plasma can be used only after you give two times. You must return to the same plasma center within 6 months and give again before any of your plasma can be used, which is a safety precaution. Plasma collection in the United States is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which requires two separate tests on a person's plasma to make sure it is safe to share with others.

Learn More

The Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy, part of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, launched the new *Giving=Living* campaign to increase awareness of the importance of giving plasma and to encourage Americans to create new, regular donation habits.

Go to hhs.gov/giveplasma to find a donation center near you.