



HPA High specification platelet donors

Why
you are
special



GIVE BLOOD

You have been given this leaflet as you have been identified as an HPA high specification platelet donor. This means you have a special platelet type which allows your donation to be used more effectively in treating patients with complex transfusion needs.

What are platelets?

Platelets are tiny gold-coloured cells in your blood which help it clot and stop bleeding when we injure ourselves. Platelet transfusions are often given to patients who develop low platelet counts either because of bleeding or from an underlying medical condition.



What is special about my platelet type?

Human Platelet Antigens (HPA) are present on the surface of platelets.

An antigen is a substance or molecule that can trigger an immune response; a defence mechanism against harmful substances such as bacteria, viruses and other pathogens. As an HPA high specification platelet donor, your platelets express HPA antigens that can be matched to babies needing platelets. From a panel of around 1,000 donors, only around 2-3% are HPA high specification platelet donors, so your platelets are very special.

Why do some patients need special 'matched' platelets?

An immune response may result in the production of a substance known as an antibody. People can potentially develop antibodies to HPA antigens if they have had a pregnancy or transfusion.

In pregnancy, HPA antibodies made by the mother can cross the placenta and enter the baby's bloodstream. When these antibodies encounter the baby's platelets, they can damage or destroy them. This causes the baby's platelet count to decrease, potentially putting them at risk of bleeding. This condition is known as Foetal Neonatal Alloimmune Thrombocytopenia (FNAIT) and occurs in around 1 in 1,000 pregnancies. FNAIT means that babies may be born with low platelet counts leaving them at risk of severe bleeding.

In these cases, the baby may be given a transfusion of platelets that have a similar HPA type to that of the mother, to prevent the platelets being destroyed by the maternal antibodies.


As a HPA high specification platelet donor, your platelets are a good match for babies affected by FNAIT.

How can I help?

Unfortunately, platelets only last for seven days after donation, so we rely on our HPA high specification donors to donate regularly throughout the year, to ensure that there is a steady supply of platelets to support babies across the whole of Scotland. As such, the donor team may ask you to donate on a different day or wait longer between appointments. This is to ensure we have matched platelets available when they're needed most and to make the best possible use of your precious donation and provide the most effective treatment to patients.

I would like some more information.

If you have any further questions, please get in touch using either the 'contact us' form at scotblood.co.uk or email us at nss.snbtsenquiry@nhs.scot. A member of the platelet team will be in touch.



Alternatively, if you have a query or would like to book your next appointment please contact your local platelet department in your usual way.

If you are no longer able to donate platelets, please let us know.

On behalf of patients across Scotland – thank you.

Contact us

t: 0345 90 90 999

e: nss.snbtSENquiry@nhs.scot

w: scotblood.co.uk

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