

Contact Details



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ALL ABOUT Therapeutic Phlebotomy



What is therapeutic phlebotomy?

This refers to donating blood for the management of a medical condition that results in too much iron or too many red cells in your blood.

- High iron levels can be due to a variety of causes including hereditary haemochromatosis, a genetic abnormality that results in increased absorption of dietary iron from the gut. Excessive iron in the blood can cause damage if it is deposited in the liver, pancreas, heart and other organs.
- Phlebotomy also assists in reducing red cell counts, which can be elevated due to overproduction of cells in the bone marrow, or secondary to smoking, testosterone use or longstanding lung problems. Increased red cell counts can 'thicken' the blood making you more prone to blood clots that can result in heart attacks or strokes.

The procedure is exactly the same as regular blood donation, although you may be required to donate more frequently than other blood donors.

When must I enrol for therapeutic phlebotomy?

- If your doctor prescribes a phlebotomy interval more frequent than the routine donation interval of 56 days or 90 days for donors over 66 years of age.
- If you have polycythaemia vera or high affinity hemoglobin.
- If you do not meet routine donor acceptance criteria but you need to donate blood to assist with the management of your medical condition.

How often do I need therapeutic phlebotomy?

This will depend on what your doctor prescribes. Your iron and red cell counts must be monitored by your doctor and the frequency of phlebotomy will be adjusted according to your response to the phlebotomy.



Will my blood be given to patients?

The referral information from your doctor is carefully reviewed to make this decision. The majority of blood from therapeutic donors can be used. There are certain medical conditions, such as polycythaemia vera and high affinity haemoglobin, where your blood cannot be used in the general supply due to genetic abnormalities within the red cell.

Are there costs involved?

- All therapeutic donors are charged for their initial phlebotomy and their first unit is discarded as per international regulations.
- Provided your blood can be used in our general supply thereafter, you will not be charged.
- If we are not able to use your blood, you will be informed and will be charged for each phlebotomy procedure and discard of the unit.

Where does my phlebotomy take place?

Once authorised, your phlebotomy may take place at any mobile or fixed-site clinic. However, if you have any complicated underlying illnesses your phlebotomy will need to take place at the phlebotomy clinic in Ndabeni which is open on Wednesdays from 08h00-14h00.

How do I enrol as a therapeutic donor?



Please contact Specialised Donations who will provide you with a referral form for your doctor to complete and a consent form for you to complete.



Once the completed forms have been received, the information will be reviewed by the Head of the Medical Division.



Once authorised, Specialised Donations will contact you to commence your phlebotomy.