

Tulane seeks recovered COVID-19 patients to volunteer as plasma donors for clinical trial

June 03, 2020 10:00 AM

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Recovered COVID-19 patients can donate their plasma for a clinical trial that will test if it is effective in treating current coronavirus patients. (Stock photo)

If you've already had COVID-19, your blood plasma could help patients currently fighting the virus.

Tulane Medical Center, Tulane School of Medicine and The Blood Center are seeking people fully recovered from COVID-19 to donate their plasma - known as convalescent plasma - for a clinical trial that will test whether it is effective in treating current coronavirus patients at different stages of disease.

"If individuals have been tested and diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past and have been feeling well for more than 14 days, their blood plasma could contain antibodies capable of neutralizing the coronavirus," said Nakhle Saba, MD, associate professor of clinical medicine in Hematology & Medical Oncology at Tulane School of Medicine and one of the principal investigators on the trial.

Plasma is the liquid portion of the blood that carries the blood cells and other proteins, including antibodies. When someone recovers from an infection, their immune system produces antibodies to

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help protect against future infections. This protection can also be extended to others via a plasma transfusion.

Convalescent plasma has been used successfully for hundreds of years to help treat other diseases, including polio, measles, influenza, Hepatitis B, Ebola and SARS, another type of coronavirus. And there are many studies ongoing throughout the U.S. and the world right now to test whether it is a viable option for treating COVID-19. "So far, based on anecdotal and historical evidence we believe it can work," said Saba. "Of course, additional data is needed before we can be sure."

Plasma is collected similarly to blood product donation. Donors must be able to document their positive COVID-19 test and must be completely recovered and symptom-free for 14 days. A typical donation consists of 200 - 800 milliliters of plasma, equivalent to 1 - 4 units of blood, which is screened for safety per The Blood Center's standard guidelines. The donation process takes approximately two hours, and donations can be made monthly.

The donated plasma will be transfused into patients who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days - one group with more severe symptoms, including pneumonia, and a second group with more moderate disease who are within three to seven days of symptom onset. In most cases, a single unit transfusion is all that will be administered.

If you are interested in donating plasma, please click [here](#) to register or call 504-321-1740 to speak with a representative to determine your eligibility for donation.

Read Dr. Saba's [interview](#) with WWNO - New Orleans Public Radio.