

Plasmapheresis Tips for People with Myasthenia Gravis

Before Treatment:

- Drink plenty of non-caffeine containing fluids to minimize blood pressure drop during plasmapheresis. Avoid coffee, tea, cola and other caffeine containing liquids for 24 hours pre treatment due to its diuretic action.
- Always eat a good meal. Recommended are foods high in iron to help keep the blood count up. Examples are fortified cereals, enriched foods, raisins, spinach, fish, beef and poultry. Never have a treatment on an empty stomach.
- Limit fatty foods such as doughnuts, bacon and breakfast rolls. The result of high fat content in the blood can cause the machine to clog.
- Wear comfortable, washable clothing. Short sleeves make for easier access to the veins in your arms.
- Carry all your medications with you. Discuss with your physician ahead of time if you are to take your medications before, during or after your treatment.
- If possible, have a driver come with you since the procedure may be tiring.
- Your frame of mind helps. Try to approach each treatment with a positive attitude. Be as relaxed as possible.
- Go to the bathroom. Using the bedpan or urinal during treatment is possible but may be difficult.

During Treatment:

- If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask.
- Do not be frightened by the machine alarms. Nurses are available to take care of them.
- Notify the staff immediately if you become dizzy or light headed. This may be due to changes in blood volume.
- Notify staff if you notice a sour taste in your mouth, tingling around lips or a pinprick sensation in your fingers and toes. This may be due to the blood thinning drug or replacement fluids being used.
- If your stomach becomes upset, a small snack such as crackers and ginger ale may relieve the nausea.

After Treatment:

- Immediately eating something may help prevent dizziness. If it does not, lie down, elevate the feet and drink juice or water. Eating something salty may also help.
- Avoid hot food and beverages for at least 2 to 3 hours. They dilate the blood vessels and may cause lightheadedness.
- Avoid the sun and heat, especially if the weather is humid. Hot showers and saunas should also be avoided.
- Bleeding may occur at the needle puncture site after leaving the Apheresis Unit. Carry an extra gauze patch to use to apply pressure if needed. If bleeding does not stop, call the Apheresis Unit.
- Do no lifting or straining of the arms for 24 hours. This could cause the needle puncture sites to rupture and bleed. If bleeding occurs, apply pressure and use an ice pack to stop bleeding.
- If bruising or swelling occurs at the needle puncture site, use cold compresses to the area at 20 minute intervals for the first 24 hours. Then use warm compresses at 20 minute intervals for the next 24 hours.
- Activities such as shaving and cutting your nails should be avoided for 4 to 6 hours. The anticoagulant that is added to the blood during plasmapheresis prevents clotting and may cause excess bleeding if the skin is cut.
- Adjust your activity level for that day according to what makes you feel best. Some prefer to rest and relax, while others prefer to keep moving with light to moderate activity.

Tips to Improve Arm Vein Quality:

- While holding objects of 2 to 5 pounds, start with arm at side and slowly bend elbow bringing weight up to the shoulder. Then, slowly lower weight down to side. Do as many repetitions as strength allows. It is suggested that this exercise be done 3 to 4 times a week.
- While holding a rubber ball, squeeze it in your hand, then slowly release it. Do as many repetitions as strength allows. It is suggested that this exercise be done 3 to 4 times a week.

Additional Suggestions:

Routine blood work should be drawn from veins other than those used for your plasmapheresis treatments or request that blood work be drawn before treatment begins.

In your home and wallet, have emergency phone numbers available and easily accessible to your family and friends.