



Blood and Transplant

Update: Delivery of UK Plasma to be made into life-saving medicines

I am writing to you as a valued NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) stakeholder regarding an important update about our UK Plasma Medicines programme.

As you may be aware, at NHSBT we are on a journey to create a world class plasma donation service to make medicines from UK plasma. The NHS currently has a 100% reliance on imported plasma medicines as a legacy of Variant Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease.

The current plasma supply chain is fragile with an overreliance on the US, which provides around 70 per cent of the global supply of immunoglobulin. There is a global shortage of immunoglobulin and increasing self-sufficiency is a strategic priority across most high and middle-income countries. Immunoglobulins help people with rare diseases, immune disorders and genetic conditions. There is also a global shortage of Albumin, and the MHRA have issued a supply disruption alert, forecast to last from July 2024 to at least December 2024. The plasma programme will deliver 80% national self-sufficiency in Albumin, an increasingly rare and valuable product. Albumin is used in trauma care, for severe burns and the restoration of circulatory volume and protein loss in liver cirrhosis. In England around 17,000 people rely on these medicines to save or improve their lives each year.

Since April 2021, we have recovered an incredible 1,000,282 litres of plasma from both plasma and blood donations. This is a major milestone for our plasma operations, and one that we have been working towards for over two years, setting up an entirely new plasma supply chain from scratch, following the Government announcement that it was lifting the ban on the use of UK plasma to produce immunoglobulins. The Department of Health and Social Care, NHSBT and NHS England, are working together on an ambition to create a long-term domestic supply of plasma in England. This is a major step forwards in securing supplies and giving patients more protection from the shocks and uncertainties of the international plasma market.

In recent weeks, the last of the regulatory requirements required for the manufacture and distribution of UK Plasma derived medicines were received, and our first shipment of around 32,000 units of frozen UK Plasma was sent to the fractionator in Germany to begin the process of being turned into lifesaving plasma medicines for the first time in 25 years. The first UK patients will receive these medicines in early 2025. Every week we will now ship 30,000 units of frozen UK plasma to our fractionator to maintain a steady supply of medicines which help us lessen our need for importing plasma-derived medicines from abroad and allow us to build a level of self-sufficiency.

At NHSBT, we currently have three dedicated Plasma Donor Centres in Birmingham, Reading and Twickenham. We are focused on building a donor base, which has just exceeded 10,000 people, and continuing to collect plasma ready to make into medicines.

If you would like to learn more about plasma and how you can donate to save and improve lives, you can find more information [here](#). If you cannot donate plasma at one of our centres, please consider donating blood as we take the plasma from your blood donation to contribute to our plasma for medicines programme.

If you require any further information on the Plasma for Medicines programme, or regarding our other work, please do not hesitate to contact us on publicaffairs@nhsbt.nhs.uk

Please, on our behalf, encourage people to become donors.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Gogarty', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gerry Gogarty
Director of Plasma For Medicines
NHS Blood and Transplant