Plasmapheresis, Pediatric

Plasmapheresis is a medical treatment in which plasma (the fluid part of blood) is removed from whole blood. After the plasma has been removed, the remainder of the whole blood can be given back to the patient. This treatment may help children with:

- Autoimmune conditions. These conditions occur when the body's immune system mistakenly turns against itself and attacks its own tissues. Substances called autoantibodies (antibodies which are produced against the body's own tissues) circulate in the blood and carry out the attack. Autoantibodies are inside plasma.
- Some neurological conditions.
- Removing unwanted substances from the blood.

PROCEDURE

Plasmapheresis in children is usually performed in the hospital. Your child will be admitted to the hospital, and taken to his or her room where the procedure is conducted. The length of time the procedure takes depends on:

- Your child's body size.
- How much plasma exchange needs to occur. Your child's caregiver will determine this.

Your child will most likely need to have a central venous catheter placed in a large vein by the doctor. This may require the need for medicine to sedate or provide pain relief during the placement. This catheter is necessary to obtain the blood required.

If the procedure is done on an outpatient basis (your child does not need to stay overnight), your child will have the procedure done (usually between 1 to 3 hours), stay for a short length of time afterward, and then be allowed to go home with you.

The frequency your child will need to have these treatments will depend on his or her illness.

RISKS

As with all treatments and procedures, there are risks. Your child's caregiver will go through these in more detail with you prior to the procedure. Risks of plasmapheresis include, but are not limited to:

- Dizziness or feeling faint- usually caused by a decrease in blood pressure.
- Bleeding which can be caused by some of the medications delivered during plasmapheresis, or during placement of the catheter.
- Allergic reaction.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

After your child has had plasmapheresis, call your child's caregiver if any of the following occur:

- Fever or chills, which could be signs of an infection.
- Bruising or bleeding at the catheter placement site.
- Nausea/ vomiting.
- Itching or rash.
- Abdominal pain.
- Any new symptoms.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION

- Seizures.
- Cough, wheezing, shortness of breath.
- Chest pain.
- Irregular heartbeat or palpitations.
- Yellowish color to skin or eyes.

Document Released: 10/15/2010
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