Is the procedure safe?

Yes, it is very safe to donate platelets. The platelet donor is not at risk of excessive bleeding. Healthy individuals have more than enough platelets, and the body begins to replenish the supply even while the donation is being made. In fact, because the body replaces platelets so quickly, platelet donors are allowed to donate more often than whole blood donors.

All equipment that comes into contact with the donor's blood is sterile. The needles, tubes and collection bags are new with each donation and are discarded after use.

Will you invest in a lifetime?

For more information or to sign up to become an apheresis platelet donor, please call Blood Center of Northcentral Wisconsin at 842-0761 or 1-866-566-5900.
One of the most remarkable acts of human kindness is the act of donating blood. Each time a blood donation is made, the donor invests in the lifetime of another human being.

Among the most dedicated of blood donors is a small group of people who give just one component of their blood - platelets - through a process known as apheresis (ay-fur-EE-sis).

Platelets are needed for blood to clot. They are essential to life; without them, a person can bleed to death from a tiny cut. For people who undergo medical treatments or have diseases that kill platelets or that interfere with the body’s ability to produce platelets, bleeding to death is a serious risk.

What is apheresis?

Apheresis (from the Greek word meaning “to separate”) is a special kind of blood donation that, instead of collecting whole blood, collects just certain parts of the donor’s blood. The process can be used to collect a variety of blood components, but the most often-needed component is platelets. During the apheresis process to collect platelets, blood is withdrawn in a manner very similar to a whole blood donation. During the process, the blood is separated into its various parts, and all but the platelets are returned to the donor. Donating platelets is as safe and comfortable as a whole blood donation, but it does take more time.

If you can give the extra time - usually from one to two hours - to make a platelet donation, you will be making an important investment - an investment in a lifetime for a critically ill person who might bleed to death without platelet transfusions.

Who will benefit from your platelet donation?

The people who need platelets are often critically ill from diseases such as leukemia and other types of cancer, or certain blood disorders that interfere with the body’s ability to produce platelets. Many of today’s modern treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy, destroy platelets. Before platelet transfusions were available, uncontrolled bleeding was the number one cause of death for these patients. One apheresis platelet donation supplies an amount of platelets equivalent to platelets made from at least six whole blood donors.

Who can donate platelets?

The requirements for apheresis donors are similar to those for giving whole blood. Generally, donors must be at least 17 years of age, weigh a minimum of 110 pounds, be in good health and be willing to give from one to two hours of their time to make a donation. Because platelets can be stored for no more than five days, donors are sometimes called on short notice when there is a specific patient who urgently needs platelets.

How does apheresis work?

During an apheresis donation, blood is drawn from a vein in the donor’s arm. Instead of being collected in a bag, the blood is run through sterile tubing and into a centrifuge inside a machine called a blood-cell separator. The centrifuge spins the blood so that the platelets are separated from the rest of the blood. The platelets are collected in a bag and the remainder of the blood is returned to the donor.