What is therapeutic plasma exchange?

During a therapeutic plasma exchange, your blood is collected and processed by an apheresis machine. The machine separates plasma (the liquid part of your blood) from the blood cells.

The plasma is removed, and the cells are returned to you with a plasma replacement fluid. The replacement fluid may be albumin (protein made by the liver), and/or fresh frozen plasma (FFP).

You may need to repeat the treatment several times for it to be effective.

What are the possible side effects and risks?

You may experience side effects during the procedure. It is important to report any side effects to your nurse.

Common side effects include:
- Discomfort and/or minor bruising from the needle sticks
- Temporary numbness, tingling in fingers or toes
- Feeling cold
- Sour taste in your mouth due to the blood thinner

Less common side effects include:
- Anxiety
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Seizures (rare)
- Severe muscle cramping
- Risk of bleeding
Serious problems include:

- Infections due to viruses such as hepatitis and HIV from FFP. This is extremely rare.

- While uncommon, you may get a reaction from the FFP. **During treatment and for 6 hours after, watch for:**
  - Fever or chills
  - Rash or itching
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Confusion or anxiety

If you have any of these, call your care team.