

What is a therapeutic venesection?

A therapeutic venesection is the same procedure as donating a unit of blood at Red Cross. It is therapeutic because it is part of the treatment for your condition and has been requested by your doctor. It is used to lower iron in your body if you have haemochromatosis or to reduce the “thickness” of your blood if you have polycythaemia.

Procedure.

The collector will ask you some health questions and obtain your written consent for the procedure. Your blood pressure will be measured. If there are any concerns about your health or your blood pressure, you will be referred back to your doctor.

A needle is inserted into your vein. This is attached to a bag and the blood drains into this bag (up to 450mls). It usually takes 15 – 20 minutes.

Preparation.

- Please have a nice big breakfast on the morning of your venesection. Have plenty of fluids (preferably water) at least one hour prior to your appointment. **DO NOT FAST.** Wear loose comfortable clothing so the collector can access the arm.

Is the procedure safe?

Sometimes your blood pressure may fall for a short time while your body adjusts to the removal of the blood. This may cause dizziness or a feeling of anxiety or faintness. If this happens, inform the collector who will keep you lying down for a short time. Drinking fluids can help replace lost volume.

Other risks are bruising and bleeding at the site of the needle insertion. This is minimised by the application of pressure to the site once the needle is removed.

Very uncommonly, there may be a risk of infection at the site or damage to the nerve next to the blood vessel.

After the procedure.

Leave the compression dressing in place for 30 minutes.

Avoid strenuous exercise and heavy lifting for 24 hours.

Resume drinking plenty of fluids for the rest of the day.

Inform your doctor if you have fever, bleeding or redness at the venesection site or if you are unwell in any way.

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