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Press Release:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UMC, EPCH AND TTP EL PASO URGE RECOVERED EL PASOANS TO DONATE CONVALESCENT PLASMA TO FIGHT COVID-19

EL PASO, Texas – University Medical Center of El Paso (UMC), El Paso Children's Hospital (EPCH) and Texas Tech Physicians of El Paso (TTP El Paso) urge any individuals who have fully recovered from novel coronavirus (COVID-19) to donate convalescent plasma as a key weapon in the fight against the virus.

Vitalant, the nation's largest independent blood provider, has launched a program to treat COVID-19 patients with blood plasma donated by people who have recovered from the disease. Known as "convalescent plasma," this blood component contains antibodies that may give patients an extra boost to fight their illness. In coordination with local hospitals, Vitalant is working to identify willing donors who qualify for this type of donation.



"We are specifically looking for volunteers who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have now recovered," said Bradford Ray, director of Blood Management at UMC. "They have the antibodies that sick patients need to, hopefully, recover."

Texas Tech Physicians of El Paso and its physicians, residents, students, are also urging recovered COVID-19 patients to donate. "People who've recovered from COVID-19 have antibodies to the disease in their blood which is called convalescent plasma," said Debabrata Mukherjee, M.D., chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso and chief of cardiovascular medicine at TTP El Paso. "We hope that convalescent plasma can boost the ability of patients with severe COVID-19 to fight the virus. If you've had and recovered from COVID-19, consider donating blood through Vitalant (West: 544-5422; East: 849-7389) and help patients in our own community with severe COVID-19 infections."

Currently, there are no vaccines or proven treatments for COVID-19 because the virus is so new. Although trials for a vaccine are underway, it is expected to be many months before one is approved. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has identified and approved convalescent plasma treatment as an “emergency investigational new drug.” It is currently the only antibody treatment available to COVID-19 patients and, as such, is a promising new tool.

“Whether individuals have already recovered or will recover from this virus in the future, we want those who are able to donate, to think about helping others fight this disease,” said Cindy Stout, CEO of EPCH.

This form of investigational treatment may provide the body more fight against COVID-19 by using antibodies that are active against the disease. With the help of our local communities, hospital partners and extensive research experience, Vitalant is gearing up to help patients fight this novel infectious disease with the help of willing recovered COVID-19 patients.

Vitalant is seeking convalescent plasma donors to help patients. Eligibility criteria are:

- Prior diagnosis of COVID-19, documented by a laboratory test
- Complete resolution of symptoms for at least 14 days
- Meet all other current FDA donor eligibility requirements to donate plasma

Those who meet that criteria and want to donate plasma are encouraged to apply through the Vitalant website [Vitalant.org/covidfree](https://www.vitalant.org/covidfree). For more information, please call the numbers above or 866-CV-PLSMA (866-287-5762).

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