Plasmapheresis

Plasma exchange in myasthenia gravis may be used in conjunction with other therapies; for example, it may be performed prior to surgical intervention. The goal of therapy is to remove the antiacetylcholine receptor antibodies, thus improving severe muscle weakness, fatigue, and other symptoms. The procedure is frequently performed when respiratory muscle involvement is evident. See Figure 43–7 and the box below for nursing care.

Figure 43–7 Plasmapheresis is a procedure used to separate the blood’s cellular components from plasma. About 50 mL per minute is withdrawn to the centrifuge in the plasmapheresis machine. The plasma is replaced with donor plasma or colloids and returned to the client.

Courtesy of Baxter Healthcare Corporation.

**Box 43–5 Client and Family Teaching: Myasthenia Gravis**

- Schedule periods of rest and avoid stress; conserve energy when possible.
- Avoid cigarette smoke, alcohol, and beverages with quinine (e.g., tonic water).
- Take medications as prescribed. If manifestations change, consult the physician; the dose may need to be adjusted.
- Avoid extremes of temperature; an environment that is too hot or too cold may cause an exacerbation of myasthenia gravis.
- Avoid people with upper respiratory infections; infections can result in an exacerbation and extreme weakness.

**Nursing Care**

Because avoiding fatigue is a major part of teaching, it is important to incorporate interventions to enhance rest and conserve energy (see Box 43–5). Suggest sitting while preparing meals and while performing hygiene and grooming, for example. Anticipating problems, such as impaired communication, and developing alternative solutions can be helpful in promoting independence.

**Nursing Diagnoses and Interventions**

Nursing care of clients with myasthenia gravis focuses not only on present problems but also on anticipated needs. Preventing myasthenic and cholinergic crises and providing psychologic support to clients and families are two important aspects of care. Individualized care depends on the specific therapy instituted. This section discusses the nursing diagnoses related to...