

# Your plasma can **help more people** than you think

## Plasma is the most versatile component of your blood

Blood is composed of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets suspended in a fluid called plasma.

Your plasma also contains very important proteins, nutrients and clotting factors which help to prevent or stop bleeding.

An average adult has approximately 5 litres of blood, 3 litres of which is plasma.

### Why donate plasma?

There are 17 different products that can be made from plasma donations. Some of the most needed products are:

**Immunoglobulins** – these are special preparations containing antibodies and are used to protect patients against some infectious diseases such as tetanus, chicken pox and hepatitis B.

**Intragam P** – this is another preparation containing antibodies which is used to boost the immune system in people with immune deficiency disorders and in the treatment of a large number of other disorders involving the immune system.

Patients who have immune deficiency disorders often require life-long treatment with Intragam P, usually every month, to prevent them from developing potentially life-threatening infections. On average, about 8 to 10 plasma donations are required to provide enough Intragam P to treat just one adult patient each month.

**Albumin** – this may be used to restore blood volume in the treatment of shock or burns, or to assist in the treatment of liver and kidney diseases.

**Biostat or Factor VIII Concentrate** – this is used to stop or prevent bleeding in people with von Willebrand disorder and haemophilia A. These people have an inherited deficiency of von Willebrand factor or Factor VIII respectively, both of which are proteins necessary for normal blood clotting.



Meet Geoff. He was born with haemophilia B and without blood and blood products, would not be alive today. Thanks to generous plasma donors, Geoff gets to fly his plane whenever he wants.

### What is involved in donating plasma?

Plasma donations are made through a process called apheresis.

As for whole blood donors, plasma donors are still required to complete the Donor Questionnaire, interview and haemoglobin (finger prick) test.

Plasma donation takes approximately 45 minutes.\*

Up to 800mL of plasma can be donated in one single plasma donation – which is greater than the amount of plasma donated in 2 whole blood donations.

### What happens during the donation?

During a plasma donation, whole blood is drawn from one arm into a sterile kit inside a cell separating machine. The machine separates the blood so that only plasma is collected.

The other blood components (red cells, white cells, and platelets) are returned to the donor via the same arm.

Saline (salt solution) will be infused during and/or at the end of the procedure for safety reasons.

Continued over

By giving time\* every few weeks, you can help us to improve the quality of life of many patients and their families.

Your commitment to regular plasma donation is highly valued.

### Are there any side effects from plasma donation?

A small amount of anticoagulant (anti-clotting agent) is mixed with each withdrawal of blood to prevent clotting in the tubing and some of this is returned to the donor with the cellular (non-plasma) components. Sometimes this can cause a slight tingling sensation around the lips and nose. This is a mild reaction to the anticoagulant and subsides after the procedure is completed.

The procedure can be stopped early if any reaction causes concern. Throughout your donation, you will be under the supervision of a trained nurse.

### How often can a plasma donation be given?

Because your red cells are returned to you when you give a plasma donation, you are able to donate as often as every 2 weeks.

You are under no obligation to continue as a plasma donor and can return to donating whole blood at any time.

### How do I become a plasma donor?

First time plasma donors must have given at least 1 whole blood donation in the last 2 years without complication.

Your selection as a plasma donor is dependent on your availability, the suitability of your veins and your haemoglobin level.

Males must be aged between 18-65 years and females must be aged between 20-65 years.

You must weigh 50kg or more.

You must meet the eligibility requirements covered by the Donor Questionnaire.

Have plenty of liquid in the 24 hours before donation, especially in warmer weather, and drink at least 3 good-sized glasses of water/ juice in the 3 hours before visiting the donor centre.

Your donation can help make someone's life better.

### James Harrison

Australian record holder

James, the Australian record holder for most blood donations, has made over 900 donations. He visits the Blood Service every fortnight and donates plasma. James' plasma is specifically useful for the immunoglobulin which prevents Rh(D) negative women developing Rh(D) antibodies during pregnancy, which may harm their unborn child.

His multiple donations have contributed to more than 1 million doses of Rh(D) immunoglobulin including, several years ago, treatment for his own daughter during her pregnancy.

"Pretty much everybody in the community has received something from the Blood Service," says James. "So please, take the time and give something back."

\*Donating plasma, including the time required for the interview and to have a rest and refreshments after donating, takes up to 1½ hours but the actual donation process takes approximately 45 minutes.