**BLOOD BUZZ** Western Cape Blood Service

Quarterly Newsletter - November 2020

## **Dear Blood Donor**,

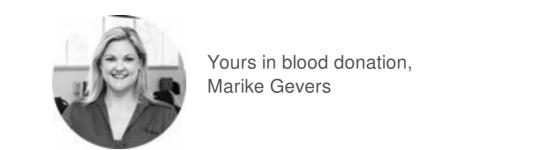
As we are drawing closer to the end of the year, we would like to start by thanking you for supporting us through a very challenging and trying year for all of us. Without your continued support, we would not have been able to do what we do best - save lives.

In our last edition of Blood Buzz for the year you can read about how we are paying it forward by giving back and how COVID-19 affected our blood stocks throughout the year. We are also introducing a Q & A section, where we will answer questions from our donors.

Be sure to read Melanie's article about overcoming a fear of needles, as you might be able to use some of this information convincing friends or family members to join you when you next donate. We also take a more in-depth look at platelet donations and the important role platelets play in our blood.

To end your year with some wholesomeness, feel free to try our iron-rich recipe - a yummy smokey tomato lentil salad, quick and easy for the hot summer months to come.

Enjoy and please stay safe.





#### **Fear Factor: Overcoming Your Fear of Needles** by Melanie Rossouw

#### "There is no illusion greater than fear." -Lao Tzu

Ever wondered what it is about needles that give people the heebie-jeebies? We know that the fear of needles is real, so we've unpacked some myths and tips to help you and especially that loved one you've been begging to donate blood with you for years to finally lay those debilitating fears to rest.

According to smiths-medical.com, needle phobias can have their roots in childhood, stemming from often inaccurate memories of painful injections, and they can go hand-inhand with a fear of the dentist, where these needles may have been administered. It also states that childhood fears can also be exacerbated by relatives or others close to the child who have phobias of their own, which rub off on the vulnerable young person and stay with them for years to come, creating a continuous circle of fear.

Furthermore, it also indicates that a fear of needles may also be attributable to evolution. For thousands of years, until fairly recently, having the skin pricked by a sharp object was highly likely to result in injury, infection or even death, meaning individuals who instinctively avoided such objects would be less likely to die. Now there's something to ponder and it does make these fears not seem as irrational as one would believe. But as W. Clement Stone so wisely stated:

#### "Thinking will not overcome fear, but action will."

So without further ado, we present a few practical tips for overcoming a fear of needles:

- 1. Identify the root. Reassess where the root of your fear came from and purposefully aim to overcome it. If you confidently make the decision today that this fear ends with you, it will.
- 2. Give yourself a pep talk. While talking to yourself may be frowned upon in society, we give you full permission to give yourself a hearty pep talk. And what works wonders, we've found, is bringing your own rent-a-crowd or cheerleading squad of buddies to the blood donation party who will cheer you on as you go through the process - an added bonus is if all of you donate together. And if pep talking is not your thing, prayer and meditation has been found to be equally effective.
- 3. Get our nurses or team members involved. When you go to your blood donation clinic, tell our team in advance about your fear. When the time comes, our nurses and team members may take a little extra time to make you feel more at ease and talk you through the process.
- 4. A last important tip is to stop taking ownership of the fear by calling it "my" fear of needles, and instead call it "the little fear that couldn't." There is tremendous power in your words and any agreement you make with an emotion, so break off any agreement you made with having a fear of needles and watch it dissolve into the illusion it really is.

Sources:

https://www.smiths-medical.com/safety-on-point/news/clinician-and-patientsafety/2016/march/22/why-are-so-many-people-scared-of-needles



### Ryan O'Connor, Well-known DJ, Donates His First Unit of Blood by Marike Gevers

On Thursday, 1 October 2020 the well-known Capetonian DJ Ryan O'Connor from Heart FM, donated blood for the first time. Beside him to hold his hand, was his lovely wife Karen O'Connor, she donated her 50th unit of blood.

Ryan could not donate in the past as he was on epilepsy medication. When he received the all-clear a month after he stopped his medication, he was first in the line to donate blood. He downloaded the WCBS app, located his closest blood donation clinic, and went to donate blood at N1 City Blood Donation Centre.

"It's always nice to arrive at a place where the staff are friendly and helpful, and they know their stuff. It makes you feel so much more confident, and that's exactly how I felt. All these processes that are in place are not only for your safety but to ensure that you can do your bit. I feel at home here", said Ryan O'Connor.

See Ryan's video above, where he shares his experience to inspire others. Well done, Ryan and Karen, together you have saved 153 lives.



#### The Impact of COVID-19 on Our Blood Stock Levels by Craig Hicks

To say that it's been a challenging 2020 so far is a gross understatement – The entire planet been affected in so many different ways by Covid-19. From all of us, let me begin by congratulating you all for your determination and wishing you plenty more perserverance for the remainder of this crazy year!

The correlation between Covid-19 and our blood stock is an interesting one. At the beginning of March when lockdown began, we had an O- shortfall with only a 1-day supply. By the end of March, we were up to a 2-day O- supply. In April things looked a lot better and blood stocks were sufficient across all blood groups.

The fact that road and other trauma incidences were down due to lockdown restrictions really did help and this mitigated the effect of our clinics collecting less blood because of lack of access to corporates and schools as well as the reluctance of donors to come out to blood donation clinics.

May started out well, but by mid-May we dropped to a 2.8 day stock again with both B groups also dropping slightly. During June our O- stock fluctuated between a 2.2 days and 3.5 days stock. In June we also started seeing shortages in B+, which has continued through to October. In July O-, B+ and B- were on critical levels, going as low as a 1.7 day supply at times.

By August we had an O and B blood group stock crises with B+ being the most critical with only a 1.1-day supply at times. If another blood group is under pressure this puts added pressure on our O stocks as it is the universal blood group and can be given to all other blood groups.

We have been experiencing a very low stock level for a few months now and this has a lot to do with collections still being low due to limited venue access, many donors still being fearful of coming out to donate and elective surgeries now taking place again. We are therefore appealing to all venues that couldn't host blood donation clinics for a while to please help us regain access again. We are also appealing to all of our donors from all blood groups who haven't donated in a while to please return and help us get our stock levels back to the required 5-day supply!



**Platelets – a Remarkable Component of Your Blood** by Estellé Lecoq

Platelets are essential to surviving and fighting cancer, chronic diseases, burns and traumatic injuries. It plays a vital role in stopping bleeding in our bodies by forming 'plugs' at the point of blood vessel injuries.

Each unit of whole blood is separated into 3 key components: red blood cells, platelets and plasma. Since the demand for platelet products is high, we require dedicated donors that only donate the platelet component of their blood.

Platelet products have a shelf life of only 5 days and have to be processed within 8 hours of donation. This means that we need to manage the platelet product stocks very carefully and make sure there is a constant supply, therefore platelet donors are often required to donate on short notice.

The platelet or apheresis donation procedure is quite different to normal whole blood donation in a number of ways. The procedure takes approximately 90 minutes and platelet donors can only donate at our premises in Pinelands, Cape Town. Our Apheresis unit receives approximately 15-20 platelet donations per day.

A needle is placed in the donor's arm that is connected by tubing to an apheresis machine where their blood is drawn out and spun down. Only the donor's platelets and some plasma are removed, and the rest of the blood is then returned to them.

Depending on a donor's platelet count and other physiological factors such as weight and blood volume, a donor can donate up to 2 platelet products at a time. An adult patient will require 200 - 300ml of platelet products per transfusion and babies require 40 - 60ml. Platelet donors can donate every 2 - 4 weeks.

In order to qualify as a platelet donor, you need to meet all our regular donor criteria and should have comfortably donated whole blood at least 5 times before. You need to have easily accessible veins, should have a flexible schedule that can allow you to donate on weekday mornings, and you cannot use aspirin or any anti-inflammatory within 72 hours of donating. Platelet donors should also have an adequate platelet count. A normal platelet count is between  $140 - 420 \times 10^9$ /. To be a platelet donor you must have a count of 200 x  $10^9$ / and above.

If you are interested in becoming a platelet donor please contact us on 021 507 6396. We value all our donors, and we would like to thank each and every one of them for being remarkable lifesavers.



#### Paying It Forward by Giving Back by Nadia Tuner

#### "It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead." Nelson Mandela

This is a philosophy that the we feel strongly about. Not only do we encourage our blood donors and communities to give back to their fellow man by donating blood, but we as a service know the importance of paying it forward to the communities that support us.

When the blood service had a name change in 2018, we were left with a large amount of redundant uniform. Rather than throw it away, we wanted to donate it to a worthy organisation. Alta du Toit Aftercare Centre makes provision for the care and development of 220 intellectually disabled adults. The centre is over 40 years old and services all communities in the Western Cape. We decided to donate all the uniforms to their staff as the organisation had not been able to sponsor their staff with uniforms in the past. They changed the logo and are now able to enjoy a whole new look. "We truly appreciate your donation; our staff loves their new uniform and wear it with pride. We were unexpectedly blessed with this kind gesture and the donation made a big positive impact on the Centre's budget, especially during this very challenging year", says Marina van der Meulen, Head of Fundraising and Marketing at Alta du Toit.

Another opportunity to give back came along when Blue Route Mall launched the Senior Santa Shoebox initiative on 1 October. We were able to make a small difference in the lives of the elderly by donating biscuits and juice to this worthy cause. We have a fixed site clinic in the mall and support the charitable programmes that the centre is passionate about. They will be packaging and delivering over 300 shoeboxes to old age homes around the Western Cape to make this Christmas a special one for the residents.

"It is a privilege for us as a Service to also have an opportunity to give back in some way. We want to thank our loyal and remarkable blood donors for their continued support; without you we would not be able to do the work we do", says Marike Gevers, Public Relations Manager from WCBS.



### **Q&A With Caroline** by Dr Caroline Hilton

Why do I have to wait 3 days after I've had a migraine to be able to donate?

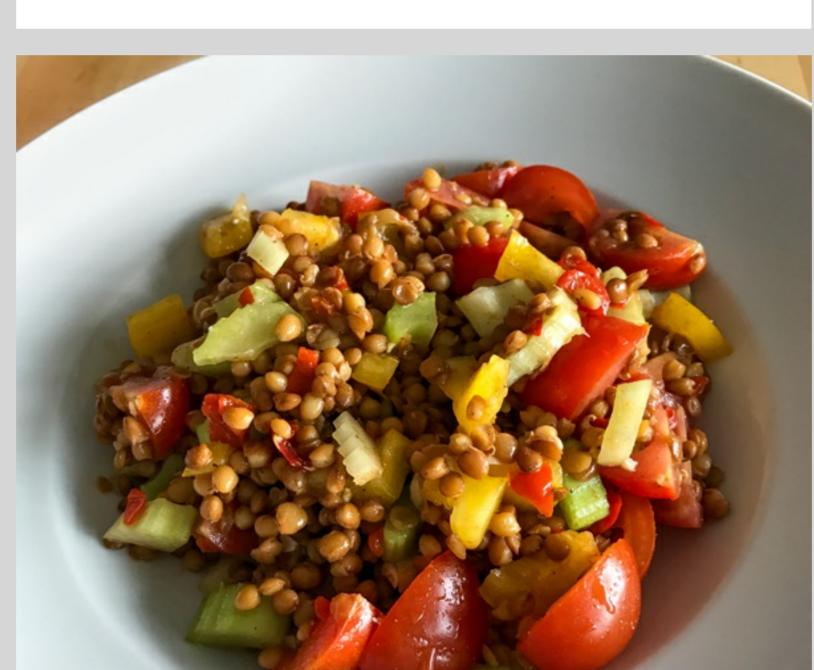
Migraines can be very debilitating and we need to make sure that you are completely well before donating blood so that you do not have a repeat episode. The medications taken for migraines also often contain aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs that temporarily affect the platelet cells in your blood, so it is necessary to wait at least three days after recovery.

Can I donate blood if I have high blood pressure?

Provided your blood pressure is stable on the day of donation and you are taking your treatment correctly, you are able to donate blood. It is also important to note that if you started new blood pressure medication, you need to take it for at least 1 month before donating to make sure it is effective. If your blood pressure is above a specific limit, you would not be able to donate on the day as the loss of blood during the donation procedure can cause your blood pressure to drop suddenly. If you have a baseline high blood pressure, this unexpected drop can be very dangerous to your health and could possibly cause a stroke.

Why do I have to wait 1 month when starting new BP meds or Antidepressants?

Before donating blood, it is very important that your blood pressure and mood have stabilised after starting new medication. These medications sometimes take a while to reach a suitable dose in people so we do not want to compromise this process.



#### Iron-rich Recipe: Smokey Tomato Lentil Salad by Irma Gevers

- Serves: 3 4 people Ingredients 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped 3 sticks of celery, chopped 1 yellow bell pepper, chopped 500g cherry tomatoes, cut into quarters 2 x 400g tins of lentils, drained and rinsed 6 sweet piquanté peppers mild, chopped (or 1tbs chopped) Olive oil for frying 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika powder 1/2 teaspoon sweet paprika powder 2 tablespoons good quality balsamic vinegar Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste Extra
- one fried egg per person - avocado, sliced
- black pepper feta cheese, crumbled - fresh coriander leaves

## Instructions

container.

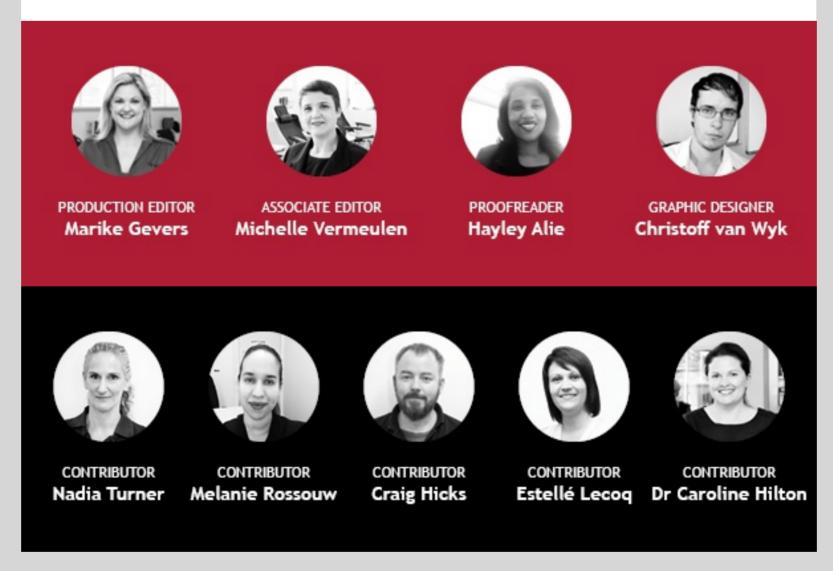
Lightly fry the garlic and the two paprika powders in the olive oil.

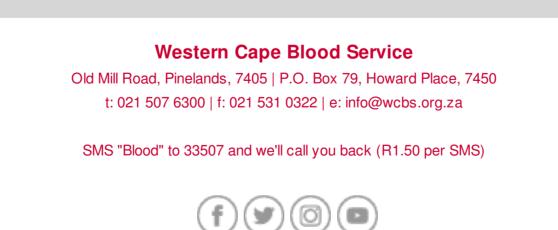
Mix together all the ingredients in a big bowl and season to taste with salt and pepper.

This salad can be prepared a few hours in advance. Store in the fridge in an airtight

Add the extra ingredients to the salad if you wish too.

# **Editorial Team**





Dear valued subscriber:

As you know, the new General Data Protection Regularions (GDPR) law came into effect 25 May 2018. To help comply with GDPR consent requirements, we need to confirm that you would like to continue to receive content from us at WCBS.

We will only use your mail address to send you our newsletter and clinic details. Should you wish to discontinue with our service, please use the unsubscribe button at the bottom of this email.