What is albumin?
Albumin is a protein made by the liver. It is the most abundant protein in blood.

What does albumin do?
Albumin has two main roles:
1. It pulls water into the blood circulation, keeping the right balance of fluid in your blood.
2. Albumin also carries important chemicals in blood.

Why is it important?
If you have low albumin levels, fluid moves out of blood vessels and into the body’s tissues. This results in swelling in parts of the body, and organs not working as well as they should.

Why would someone have a low albumin?
Low levels of albumin can be due to an extreme situation like acute loss of blood or plasma due to trauma, burns, after heart-lung bypass surgery, and in patients with multiple organ failure. It can also be part of a slow, gradual process in the case of liver disease, cancer or malnutrition.

Can albumin be replaced if it is low?
Yes. If the liver works well, the body will make more albumin. Sometimes that is not possible or will take too long. In that case, albumin replacement can be given.

What is Albumex® and how is it produced?
Albumin is fractionated at CSL (see our fact sheet I Need to Know About Plasma Fractionation, Vol 1, No 11) from pooled human plasma, supplied by the Blood Service, donated by Australian donors. This bottled albumin is called by its trade name, Albumex®, and comes in two strengths. Albumex® is a little thicker than water. It can range in colour from almost colourless or pale yellow, through to amber or green.

What are the two types of Albumex®?
CSL manufactures:
- Albumex® 4. This has 40g of albumin per litre (4%). It comes in 100 mL and 500mL vials.
- Albumex® 20. This has 200g of albumin per litre (20%). It comes in 10 mL and 100 mL vials.

When is Albumex® 4 used?
Albumex® 4 may be used when the blood volume is low (hypovolaemia), during heart-lung bypass surgery, and in procedures where the patient’s plasma is replaced (plasma exchange). During a plasma exchange three to four litres of Albumex® 4 may be used.

When is Albumex® 20 used?
Albumex® 20 may be used when Albumin levels are extremely low, for burns patients to maintain balance of fluid, and during haemodialysis to remove excess tissue fluid.

How is it stored?
Albumex products are stored below 30°C and generally have an expiry of four (4) years.

Blood Fact
Albus means white. Albumin is the white protein.