

Appeal for blood donations as stocks run low

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for the Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (BTS) today (December 20) announced that blood inventories have been depleted to a very low level, with only about three days' stock remaining. As blood collection continues to drop amid the sustaining cold weather, daily blood collection remains unstable and has been unable to meet the daily target. With the increasing daily demand for blood from public hospitals during the winter surge, the BTS appeals to the public to come forward to donate blood as soon as possible to replenish the blood inventories, in order to sustain necessary blood transfusions for patients in need and to give patients the blessing of reunion amid the festive seasons.

Most BTS donor centres will maintain service during the Christmas and New Year holidays (Annex 1). Members of the public are strongly advised to donate blood before travelling abroad to share their holiday blessings with patients. As a token of gratitude, the BTS has prepared a "Christmas edition folding cup" for blood donors who come forward to give blood during December 20 to 30 at donor centres or donation vehicles (Annex 2).

The BTS invites the public to come forward and give blood now for a timely replenishment of inventories for patients in need. The public is advised to make an appointment by contacting BTS donor centres via the Donor Web Portal (blooddonor.ha.org.hk) or the "HK Blood" mobile app.

Moreover, BTS announced that the blood donor screening policy on variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (commonly known as mad cow disease) will be lifted tomorrow (December 21). Members of the public who had stayed three or more months cumulatively in the United Kingdom between 1980 and 1996; and who had stayed five or more years cumulatively in France or Ireland between 1980 and 2001, will be accepted to donate blood. In other words, members of the public who had previously resided in the abovementioned countries will all be accepted to donate blood in future. BTS appealed to those who were suspended from donating blood due to the policy concerned in the past to come forward during the blood donation drives to save lives. Members of the public can call the BTS donor centres or 2710 1333 during office hours with enquiries on the updates when planning a blood donation.

The policy was implemented by BTS in late 1999, and has been reviewed and updated in a timely manner over the years. With reference to international trends and guidelines, as well as related medical literature and data on variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in Hong Kong, the Hospital Authority (Blood Transfusion Service) Expert Panel on Blood and Blood Products Safety has approved to update the policy earlier.