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Blood donations up 3 times on Lunar New Year 's eve compared to last year

By Joanne Leow, Channel NewsAsia

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SINGAPORE: The Blood Bank has reported a three-fold increase in donors on the eve of Lunar New Year. But this year, blood collection increased by 75% in the four days before Chinese New Year from 120 units per day to 210 units. A visit to the Blood Bank on Chinese New Year's Eve saw quite a crowd - 162 donors in just 5 hours.

The festive season usually means a dip in the Blood Bank since most are busy celebrating.

Said Cecilia Tan, Director, Blood Donor Recruitment, Red Cross Society: "Normally during festive season our blood collection is low because most people are preparing for the Chinese New Year, so the thought of blood donation may not have crossed their mind."

Most, like research nurse Charmane Yuen, were regular donors. She has given blood 23 times in the past 10 years.

"I graduated from nursing and then we were taught that giving blood and helping people was a good thing, so I've taken an effort to come down quarterly to give my blood," she said.

Another donor said: "I think that giving blood gives you good luck, and furthermore you can help people."

The Blood Bank said it has enough stock to last through the first 2 days of the Lunar New Year, when it will be closed.

Donating red blood cells only takes 5 to 10 minutes and the blood can be kept for up to 42 days.

But the Blood Bank also needs other blood products like platelets which have a shorter shelf life of 5 days.

Platelet donors like Issan Jacob need to give up at least 1 to 2 hours of their time for their blood to be put through a special machine.

"Blood everybody can donate blood, but only few people have the time and who can donate platelets, so I thought yeah that's a good thing to do," he said.

The festive season is when blood donations are needed the most.

And this year, staff at the Blood Bank have gotten into the mood by dressing up in their Chinese New Year finery.

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