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Media Release

Giving the gift of blood

The Royal United Hospital is appealing to the public to make someone very happy this Christmas with the gift of blood.

Winter is a busy time for the NHS and although the RUH is well prepared for an increase in the demand for services, there are factors that can make it difficult for people to make their regular blood donations at this time of year.

Transfusion specialist at the RUH, Helen Maria, says: "The Transfusion Team at the RUH is constantly monitoring our use of donor blood as we are acutely aware of the problems with the blood supply which can arise over the winter. Donors can be prevented from making donations due to bad weather or illness and public holidays can also reduce the number of donor sessions available.

"The NHS Blood & Transplant service keeps us regularly updated on the national blood supply, so we are able to respond very quickly to any alert about reduced blood stocks. The RUH has a contingency plan for blood shortage - all hospitals must have one - it advises us how to manage our clinical workload, so during a shortage, donor blood is used only where it is needed most.

"The lowest priority is non-urgent planned surgery, which may need blood during or after the surgery - a reduction in blood supply would result in some of these procedures being postponed. The highest priorities would include neonatal care, emergency admissions with life-threatening blood loss, emergency surgery and cancer treatment - blood provision for these areas would not be affected, even during the most severe and prolonged blood shortage. In a major shortage, every case will be reviewed by a team of senior clinical staff to make sure we are providing the best care and treatment possible.

"We hope the public will add one more thing to their 'to do' lists - to make a blood donation before the holidays. This will ensure that someone somewhere will be able to enjoy Christmas this year and for many years to come."

Ends