

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (October 8) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, and that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From September 30 to October 6, two community-acquired LD cases were reported. They are:

1. A female patient, aged 81 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Block B, Shun Lee Building, 220 Ferry Street, Yau Tsim Mong District; and
2. A male patient, aged 58 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Mainway Court, 15-33 Kwong Wa Street, Yau Tsim Mong District.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of October 6, 81 LD cases had been reported in 2018. In 2017 and 2016, there were 72 and 75 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may get infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

1. Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
2. Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
3. If using these devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not tap water. Also, clean and maintain them

regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute the infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow medical advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile (not distilled or tap) water to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain them regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2- μm filters. Never leave stagnant water. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 2. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 3. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 4. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Suspected case tests negative for MERS-CoV

The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health today (October 8) reported that the suspected case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) pending results yesterday (October 7), upon preliminary testing, tested negative for MERS Coronavirus.

EMSD announces latest sampling results for legionella at fresh water cooling towers

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (October 8) announced that the department tested 107 water samples collected from cooling towers in 94 buildings in its routine inspections in September this year. Five samples were detected to have a total legionella count at or above the upper threshold, which is 1 000 colony-forming units per millilitre. The latest statistics are set out in Annex 1.

The cooling towers in which the five samples were collected in September are located at 17-19 Electric Road, North Point; 386 Portland Street, Mong Kok; 70 Fa Yuen Street, Mong Kok; 49-51 Woosung Street, Yau Ma Tei and 34 Mong Kok Road, Mong Kok. The EMSD has issued nuisance notices under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance to the owners of the cooling towers requiring appropriate disinfection work to be done. Disinfection of the cooling towers in these five cases has already been completed by the owners. Details of these five cases can be found in Annex 2. The EMSD publishes the latest statistics of the above information on a half-monthly basis on its website

(www.emsd.gov.hk/en/other_regulatory_services/cooling_towers/water_sampling/index.html).

The EMSD reminds the owners of fresh water cooling towers that they have the responsibility to design, operate and maintain cooling towers properly. They should arrange regular inspections, timely maintenance and periodic testing of the water quality in their cooling towers in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fresh Water Cooling Towers issued by the department to prevent the proliferation of legionella.

Vaccination Subsidy Scheme 2018/19 to start on October 10

With the launch of the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) 2018/19 this Wednesday (October 10), the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (October 8) reminded eligible persons to receive subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) in a timely manner to better protect themselves in the coming winter influenza season.

The coverage of the VSS in 2018/19 has been extended from elderly persons aged 65 or above to Hong Kong residents aged 50 or above, increasing the number of beneficiaries of the scheme by about 1.8 million. The subsidy for SIV under the VSS will also be increased from \$190 to \$210 per dose for all eligible groups.

The eligible groups are Hong Kong residents who are:

- Persons aged 50 years or above;
- Children aged 6 months to under 12 years;
- Persons with intellectual disabilities;
- Persons receiving Disability Allowance, regardless of types of disabilities (i.e. physical, mental, intellectual or other conditions); and
- Pregnant women.

Eligible groups can receive subsidised vaccination from enrolled private doctors in their clinics. Enrolled doctors should display the designated logo near the entrance of their clinics and a pricing poster in the clinic showing their charges. The list of enrolled doctors and their service fees after deducting the government subsidy has been uploaded to the eHealth System (Subsidies) (apps.hcv.gov.hk/SDIR/EN).

"Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive SIV for personal protection," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Based on past epidemiological patterns, the winter influenza season usually occurs from January to March/April each year. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, we urge eligible persons to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Vaccination among family members is key to protecting their personal and family's health."

The public, especially eligible groups, may call the CHP's hotline (2125 2125) for enquiries during office hours or visit the CHP's [Vaccination Schemes page](#) for more information.

109 Mainland higher education institutions to exempt Hong Kong students from joint entrance examination

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (October 8) welcomed the announcement by the Ministry of Education on the detailed arrangements of the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions for 2019. The number of Mainland higher education institutions participating in the Admission Scheme will increase to 109 (listed in the Annex). The quota on the number of students nominated by each school under the School Principal Nomination Scheme (SPNS) will also increase to eight.

"There will continue to be enhancements to the Admission Scheme in 2019. Compared with 2018, there are seven more institutions participating in the scheme, namely the Central Conservatory of Music, the Central Academy of Drama, the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Hubei University, Guangdong Ocean University, Chang'an University and Lanzhou University. The EDB welcomes more renowned institutions in the Mainland to participate in the scheme, thus providing students with a wider choice," a spokesman for the EDB said.

"In addition, the quota on the number of students nominated by each school under the SPNS will increase from six to eight. The minimum entrance requirement adopted by the SPNS remains unchanged i.e. the attainment in the HKDSE Examination of a total score of 10 or above in the four core subjects i.e. Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies, and among which none of them is below 2."

As in previous years, the Admission Scheme will admit Hong Kong students based on their results in the HKDSE Examination and exempt them from taking the Joint Entrance Examination for Mainland Institutions, hence relieving their pressure and enabling them to concentrate on their preparation for the HKDSE Examination. Candidates sitting for the HKDSE Examination in 2019 are welcome to enroll in the scheme.

The enrolment process of the Admission Scheme in 2019 will follow the practice of previous years, which consists of both online application and subsequent on-site confirmation of application. According to the admission procedure for 2019, students can apply online from March 1 to 20, 2019 and

perform on-site confirmation and pay the enrolment fee at the China Education Exchange (HK) Centre from March 11 to 29, 2019 (except Sundays and public holidays). Institutions may arrange interviews based on the application information submitted by candidates. School admission will start in late July, 2019. Institutions will announce admission results and arrange supplementary enrolment based on their admission results at the end of July.

Details of the Admission Scheme are available at the EDB's website (www.edb.gov.hk/expo18).

To help students and parents gain a better understanding of the scheme, the EDB and the Ministry of Education will jointly hold the 2018 Mainland Higher Education Expo on December 1 and 2 this year.

During the event, there will be talks by the Ministry of Education on details of the application procedure and admission arrangements under the scheme, as well as briefing sessions conducted by representatives of the institutions on the characteristics and career prospects of individual programmes.

The 109 Mainland higher education institutions participating in the Admission Scheme for 2019 will set up exhibition booths and organise talks to provide information on areas such as features of the faculties and subjects, admission criteria, the number of places and tuition fees. There will also be sharing sessions during which some Hong Kong students who have graduated from Mainland institutions will talk about their study life on the Mainland. In addition, senior management members of sizable corporations will give talks on the career prospects of students after graduation from Mainland higher education institutions.

The Expo will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre from 10am to 7pm on December 1 (Saturday), and from 10am to 6pm on December 2 (Sunday). Admission is free.

The EDB, the China Education Exchange (HK) Centre and Hok Yau Club have jointly compiled the "Handbook on the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions". The handbook provides comprehensive information on the Admission Scheme and further studies on the Mainland, including information on all the institutions participating in the scheme, programmes offered, strategy on programme choices, and sharing by graduates of Mainland universities. The handbook will be distributed free of charge at the Expo. Its e-version will be uploaded on the website of the EDB (www.edb.gov.hk/expo18) after the Expo.

Eligible Hong Kong students enrolled in undergraduate programmes of designated Mainland institutions could apply for means-tested subsidy (a full-rate subsidy of HK\$16,800 or a half-rate subsidy of HK\$8,400 per annum) or non-means-tested subsidy (a subsidy of \$5,600 per annum) under the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme (MUSSS). Application details of MUSSS for the 2019/20 academic year will be announced in mid-2019.