

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (August 20) 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 August 12 to 18, three community-acquired LD cases were reported. They are:

1. A male patient, aged 74 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Lai Yeung House, Lei Cheng Uk Estate, Sham Shui Po;
2. A male patient, aged 88 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Yin Tak House, Yin Lai Court, Lai King; and
3. A male patient, aged 68 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Oi Ming House, Yau Oi Estate, Tuen Mun.

"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 August 18, 58 LD cases have 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:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and

- 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.

Transcript of remarks by SLW on maternity leave

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, on maternity leave today (August 20) after attending a plenary session of the Asian Family Summit:

Reporter: Will the government pay for the part of the extra maternity leave, that is about four weeks?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: We are looking at that particular direction. Because, as I just mentioned, for most places in the world, most of those parental leaves are financed by a kind of social insurance, which is normally paid by both employers and employees in terms of insurance. In Hong Kong, we don't have a social insurance for that particular purpose. So, we are examining the lessons that we can learn from other countries, where the government will pay part of the cost in maternity leave, but the details are yet (to be available) and up to our study and conclusion. So I have to wait until we finish the whole thing before I can say anything.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, August 20, 2018 is 104.4 (up 0.2 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, August 18, 2018 was 104.2 (down 0.4 against last Friday's index).

Sixteen building plans approved in June

The Buildings Department approved 16 building plans in June, with four on Hong Kong Island and 12 in the New Territories.

Of the approved plans, nine were for apartment and apartment/commercial developments, three were for commercial developments, two were for factory

and industrial developments, and two were for community services developments.

In the same month, consent was given for works to start on 12 building projects which, when completed, will provide 128 598 square metres of gross floor area for domestic use involving 1 818 units, and 63 585 sq m of gross floor area for non-domestic use. The department has received notification of commencement of works for nine building projects.

The department also issued 23 occupation permits, with four on Hong Kong Island, five in Kowloon and 14 in the New Territories.

Of the buildings certified for occupation, the gross floor area for domestic use was 77 737 sq m involving 1 056 units, and 71 357 sq m was for non-domestic use.

The declared cost of new buildings completed in June totalled about \$5.7 billion.

In addition, six demolition consents involving six building structures were issued.

The department received 2 968 reports about unauthorised building works (UBWs) in June and issued 856 removal orders on UBWs.

The full version of the Monthly Digest for June can be viewed by the public on the Buildings Department's homepage (www.bd.gov.hk).

FEHD cancels licence of restaurant in Fanling

The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene today (August 20) cancelled the licence of a restaurant in Fanling, as the operator repeatedly breached the Food Business Regulation (FBR) by illegally extending the business area.

The restaurant is located on the ground floor of Fu Yin Building at 25 Luen On Street, Fanling.

"In May this year, two convictions for the above-mentioned breach were recorded against the operator of the restaurant. A total fine of \$6,000 was levied by the court and 30 demerit points were registered against the licensee under the department's demerit points system. The contraventions resulted in the cancellation of the licence," a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said.

The licensee of the food premises had a record of four convictions for the same offence between June last year and March this year. A total fine of \$23,500 was levied and 60 demerit points were registered. The breaches led to business suspensions for seven days in August last year and 14 days in June this year.

The spokesman reminded licensees of food premises to comply with the FBR, or their licences could be suspended or cancelled.

Licensed food premises are required to exhibit a sign, at a conspicuous place near the main entrance, indicating that the premises have been licensed. A list of licensed food premises is available on the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/licence-foodPremises-rest.html).