

CHP follows up on a pulmonary tuberculosis case involving a secondary school student

â€‹The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 30) following up on a confirmed case of pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) involving a secondary school student and reminds members of the public to seek medical advice promptly if they have symptoms, such as persistent cough, blood in sputum, weight loss, fever and night sweating. Those diagnosed with TB should follow their doctor's instructions and complete the entire course of anti-TB treatment.

On May 14, the CHP received a notification from Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) that an 18-year-old male secondary school student with good past health had attended QEH the previous day (May 13) due to shortness of breath, persistent cough, blood in sputum, fever and weight loss. He was admitted to the hospital for treatment on the same day. His sputum specimen tested positive for *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The patient did not receive Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine as recommended by the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme.

The patient was discharged against medical advice on May 25. He was referred to the CHP's Chest Clinic for follow-up as he needed to continue receiving directly observed treatment. He attended the Chest Clinic on May 26 for consultation and received one dose of anti-TB treatment, but did not continue to attend as scheduled. Medical staff of the Chest Clinic repeatedly reminded the patient and his family of the importance of continuing the treatment. Since the patient has only received anti-TB treatment for a short period of time, discontinuing the treatment would worsen the infection, increase the risk of transmission and emergence of drug-resistant TB, posing a public health threat. Given the above, the CHP issued an Isolation Order today and the patient was taken to Princess Margaret Hospital for isolation and treatment.

The CHP is arranging screening for teachers, staff and students of the same grade as the patient at the school. No other cases of infection have been recorded so far.

"TB is an airborne disease. When a TB patient coughs or sneezes, small droplets containing the tubercle bacilli are generated and spread in the air. If another person breathes in these small airborne droplets, he or she may be infected with the germ. However, prolonged exposure is usually the prerequisite for the disease to be effectively transmitted. Members of the public should always be vigilant against TB and adopt a healthy lifestyle with a balanced diet, avoid smoking and alcohol, and have suitable exercise and adequate rest to minimise the chance of contracting the disease. BCG vaccine is effective in preventing serious cases of extrapulmonary tuberculosis (such as TB meningitis). Parents should arrange for their

children under 15 who have not received the BCG vaccine to get vaccinated as soon as possible," the Controller of the CHP, Dr Edwin Tsui, said.

People with symptoms such as persistent cough, blood in sputum, weight loss, fever and night sweating should seek prompt medical advice. Early identification of TB cases and prompt initiation of anti-TB treatment remain the mainstay of TB control. The Chest Clinics under the CHP provide TB patients with free outpatient consultation and treatment. If TB disease is diagnosed, the patient should strengthen their respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, and receive TB treatment under the doctor's advice.

The CHP will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate actions.