

CHP investigates 13 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (April 9), the CHP was investigating 13 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 974 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 973 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Meanwhile, the CHP has been closely reviewing the usage and demand of various quarantine centres (QCs). In view of the rapid development of the COVID-19 epidemic and the relatively high number of close contacts, it is anticipated that the usage of quarantine facilities will remain high. The Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Infection Control under the CHP earlier made a recommendation on the duration of stay of confinees under QCs based on their capacity. Subject to the occupancy of QCs, the confinees at QCs would be quarantined for the first 10 days and be put under home quarantine for the remaining four days when necessary. Having considered the limited available quarantine facilities and the above recommendation, the CHP will implement in phases the arrangement in various QCs starting from April 11 (Saturday), to ensure that there are adequate quarantine facilities to cope with the development of the disease.

The CHP emphasised that all confinees under quarantine at QCs are asymptomatic. After the implementation of the above arrangement, confinees will undergo COVID-19 viral tests before discharge from QCs. Only if they have tested negative and have passed the assessments on their health conditions and other relevant factors by the healthcare professionals to prove that they are deemed appropriate to be put under home quarantine for the remaining four days will such an arrangement be made. QC staff members will also arrange electronic wristbands for these confinees to comply with the home quarantine requirement before they are discharged from QCs.

The newly reported cases announced today involve eight males and five females aged between 21 and 66. Among them, 10 had travel history during the incubation period and two are overseas students. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex.

The CHP urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons, who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "In view of the proliferation of the

disease and continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

The CHP will report the cases to the World Health Organization, the National Health Commission, the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, relevant health authorities and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 4pm today, a total of 87 722 calls were received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled,

performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;

- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing.

Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and

- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.