

CHP investigates four additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (April 17), the CHP was investigating four additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 1 022 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 1 021 confirmed cases and one probable case).

In addition, the DH has been closely monitoring and reviewing the health quarantine and COVID-19 testing arrangements for inbound travellers. Starting from this Sunday (April 19), apart from the existing requirement that asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving on flights from the UK, the US and other areas in Europe have to proceed to the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at the AsiaWorld-Expo to collect their deep throat saliva samples and wait for the test results there, passengers arriving on other flights landing in mornings are also required to wait for the test results at the TSCC after collecting their deep throat saliva samples there.

Given the increased number of passengers who will be waiting at the TSCC, the DH has implemented stringent infection control measures to protect the health of passengers. If the number of passengers on the flights from the above areas/time slot exceed the maximum capacity of TSCC, the passengers will be allowed to go home or a designated place after specimen collection for compulsory quarantine. If tested positive, they will be arranged for admission to hospital as soon as possible for treatment while their close contacts will be sent to designated quarantine centres. For those who are tested negative, they can go home or to a designated place to continue completion of the 14-day compulsory quarantine.

Meanwhile, starting from today, people arriving in Hong Kong who have been to Daegu and Gyeongsangbuk-do in Korea, Iran or Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto regions in Italy in the past 14 days are required to undergo compulsory quarantine at home or a designated place, the same arrangement as other travellers arriving from other countries/areas.

The newly reported cases announced today involve one male and three females aged between 13 and 55. Among them, all had a travel history during the incubation period and three are overseas students. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed case 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 93 638 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.