

CHP investigates seven additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 8pm today (February 24), the CHP is investigating seven additional cases of COVID-19, taking the number of confirmed cases to 81 in Hong Kong so far.

The first case was detected via the "Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme" which was expanded from February 19 to cover the patients attending the General Out-patient Clinics as well as Accident and Emergency Departments, involving a 35-year-old man (the 75th case) with good past health who lives in Block 3, Grand YOHO, Yuen Long. He developed fever and cough since February 19. He sought medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Department at Pok Oi Hospital (POH) on February 21. His deep throat saliva specimen was tested positive for COVID-19 virus on February 22 and was arranged and admitted to Tuen Mun Hospital (TMH) for treatment. He is now in a stable condition. The patient had been to his home in Futian, Shenzhen between February 3 and 7. His home contacts include wife, daughter and his sister-in-law from Shenzhen. His wife who presented with symptoms was transferred to TMH for isolation and treatment while his daughter and sister-in-law are asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine. Taxi drivers who drove the patient from his home to POH at around 7pm on February 21 and from POH to his home at around 9pm on the same night are urged to call the CHP hotline.

The second case involves a 57-year-old woman (the 76th case) who lives in Phase 1 of Redhill Peninsula in Tai Tam with good past health. She developed sore throat since February 8 and fever on February 10. She sought medical advice at the Outpatient Department (OPD) at the Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital (HKSH) between February 12 and 16 and was admitted to HKSH for treatment on February 16 and 17. She sought medical advice at OPD at the HKSH on February 23 again and was referred and admitted to Ruttonjee Hospital for treatment. Her respiratory sample was tested positive for COVID-19 virus and is now in a stable condition. She had travelled to Osaka in Japan (January 26 to 30) during the incubation period and returned to Hong Kong on January 31. Her husband, second and third sons, and her maid who live with her are all asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The third case involves a 68-year-old woman (the 77th case) with good past health who lives in Majestic Apartments, 301-319 King's Road, North Point. She developed cough since February 19. She sought medical advice from a private doctor yesterday and called the CHP hotline subsequently. She was arranged to be taken to Queen Mary Hospital (QMH) by ambulance and was admitted for treatment. Her respiratory sample was tested positive for COVID-19 virus and is now in a stable condition. The patient had no travel history during the incubation period. Her husband and domestic helper who live with her are asymptomatic and will be arranged for quarantine.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations revealed that the 76th and 77th cases announced today together with the patients of the 65th, 70th, 73rd and 74th cases announced earlier (6 patients in total) had all visited a Buddhist temple named Fook Wai Ching She in Maylun Apartments in January or February. Those who also had visited the temple during the above period and developed relevant symptoms later, are urged to call the CHP hotline.

The fourth to seventh cases (the 78th to 81st cases) involve four passengers of Diamond Princess cruise, namely a 59-year-old woman, a 58-year-old woman, a 57-year-old man and a 57-year-old woman. All with good past health, the four patients stayed on the cruise from January 25 to February 21, and returned to Hong Kong by a chartered flight arranged by the Hong Kong Government on February 22. Their samples were preliminary tested positive for COVID-19 virus, hence they were arranged for admission and treatment at the QMH yesterday. Their respiratory samples were tested positive for COVID-19 virus by further testing today. They are now in a stable condition. The patient of the 78th case developed fever and headache today. Her sister and niece, who travelled with her on the cruise, have no symptoms and are currently under quarantine. The patient of the 79th case developed throat discomfort since February 4. Her husband, who travelled with her on the cruise, has no symptoms and is currently under quarantine. One of the five travel collaterals of the patient of the 80th case presented with symptoms and was transferred to United Christian Hospital for treatment yesterday. His other travel collaterals are asymptomatic and are currently under quarantine. Three travel collaterals of the patient of the 81st have no symptoms and are currently under quarantine.

Besides, the CHP appeals to taxi drivers who drove the patient of the 72nd case from his home at Choi Tin House, Hing Tin Estate in Lam Tin to Kwong Tin Shopping Centre in Lam Tin and the same way back at around 2-3pm on February 18 and February 20 to call the CHP hotline.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. Quarantine will be arranged for close contacts while medical surveillance will be arranged for other contacts. For the progress on the contact tracing of the cases, please see annex.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "According to our preliminary epidemiological investigations, some of the confirmed cases are locally infected. The CHP strongly urged 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."

The spokesman said, "On the 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. The public should go out less and reduce social activities, and maintain appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible."

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps); 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, National Health Commission, Health Commission of Guangdong Province and Health Bureau of Macao.

The CHP has set up a hotline (2125 1122) for public enquiries. The hotline operates from 8am to midnight daily. As at 4pm today, a total of 19 861 calls were received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public grasp 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 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 liter of water into each drain outlet (U-traps) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- 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.