

CHP notified by National Health Commission of plague case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (July 6) received notification from the National Health Commission of a case of plague affecting a herder in Inner Mongolia.

According to epidemiological investigations and clinical presentations, the patient was diagnosed to have bubonic plague yesterday (July 5) and had been to a place where plague was known to occur. The patient has been admitted to hospital for treatment under isolation and is in stable condition.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Plague is transmitted from an infected animal (mainly rodents) to humans through the bite of its fleas. Plague can also be contracted when cuts or other breaks in the skin come into contact with the body fluid or tissue of infected animals."

Bubonic plague is a kind of plague which is not usually transmitted directly from person to person unless there is contact with pus from suppurating buboes. Patients infected with bubonic plague usually present with fever, headache and painful swelling of the regional lymph nodes, especially around the groin. The infection can progress to septicaemic plague when the bacteria invade the blood stream.

The spokesman reminded travellers to avoid visiting plague-endemic areas. They should also heighten vigilance on rodents and prevent flea bites. Insect repellents against mosquitoes may equally prevent flea bites and repel blood-sucking insects. Formulations in lotions or sprays should contain DEET, IR3535 or icaridin (also known as picaridin) as active ingredients. The public should refer to the CHP's [tips for using insect repellents](#).

"Travellers returning from affected areas with a sudden onset of fever, shaking chills, body pains or chest discomfort should seek medical advice as soon as possible and reveal their travel history for prompt investigation and management. Plague is a statutorily notifiable disease and doctors should report suspected or confirmed cases to the CHP for investigations and control," the spokesman added.

Travellers should take heed of the health advice below during travel:

- Prevent flea bites by wearing long-sleeved shirts and trousers, and applying insect repellent/insecticide. DEET-containing insect repellent can be applied to exposed skin and clothing, while insecticide containing permethrin can be applied to clothing, not the skin;
- Avoid going to rural areas, camping or hunting;
- Never touch rodents, dead animals and their tissues or contaminated

materials;

- Avoid close contact with patients, especially those with a cough or chest infection;
- Avoid going to crowded areas;
- Seek medical care immediately in case of a sudden onset of fever, chills, painful lymph nodes, difficulty in breathing with coughing and/or blood-tainted sputum; and
- Consult a doctor immediately after contact or exposure to pneumonic plague patients or high-risk exposures, such as bites from fleas or direct contact with body fluids or tissues of potentially infected animals, for prompt assessment of the need for preventive medication.

Travellers may visit the CHP's [plague page](#), [Travel Health News](#) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department's [advice on rodent control](#) for details.