

HA continues service demand surge special measures

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (February 7) that in view of the sustained high level of daily first attendance instances at accident and emergency (A&E) departments in public hospitals, the service demand surge special measures will continue until further notice. During this period, the HA will continue to closely monitor the situation and flexibly arrange hospital beds, manpower and resources to meet the heightened demand while ensuring emergency services remain unaffected.

In response to the cold weather and increased service demand at public hospitals during multiple long holidays including Christmas and Chinese New Year, the HA activated service demand surge special measures on December 21, 2024, to cope with rising demand for hospital services especially A&E departments and inpatient services. The special measures include enhanced manpower, bed capacity, and laboratory testing services for influenza and other viruses; hospital command centres co-ordinating discharge procedures and supporting arrangements for admission, discharges and transfers to ensure patients receive timely and appropriate treatment and enable beds to be available for new admissions; and special refund arrangements at A&E departments to provide stable patients with the flexibility to choose alternative medical institutions.

The HA spokesperson said, "Apart from cold weather, there have been reports of influenza and other infectious disease outbreaks at several popular travel destinations recently, and schools have resumed after holidays. Hong Kong's influenza and other respiratory virus activities are expected to remain active. Since entering the winter influenza season, public hospitals have seen attendance figures notably higher than the baseline, with A&E department attendance reaching around 5 500 and medical ward admissions around 1 100. We urge patients with mild conditions to consider seeking treatment at general outpatient clinics, private doctors or 24-hour outpatient services at private hospitals to reduce pressure on public hospital A&E departments."

The HA reminds members of the public to exercise extra caution when travelling during holidays, pay attention to their physical condition at all times, and wear masks in crowded places for enhanced protection. People should also keep warm and stay vigilant regarding personal and environmental hygiene to prevent disease transmission. Those with respiratory infection symptoms should wear masks and seek medical advice promptly. Members of the public can visit the Health Bureau's Primary Care Directory (www.pcdirectory.gov.hk) to view relevant information on healthcare institutions.

The HA also appeals to members of the public to get vaccinated early for

seasonal influenza and COVID-19, especially high-risk groups, to reduce the chance of infection for themselves and their family members, as well as to reduce critical cases and deaths. For the latest information on vaccination programmes, members of the public may visit the Centre for Health Protection COVID-19 Vaccination Programme website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106934.html) and the Vaccination Schemes website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html).