

CHP reminds public on precautions against cold weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 15) reminded the public, particularly the elderly and people with chronic illnesses, to adopt appropriate measures to protect their health in view of the cold weather.

A spokesman for the CHP said that cold weather can easily trigger or exacerbate diseases, especially among the elderly and persons suffering from heart disease, respiratory illness or other chronic illnesses.

"Elderly people have less insulating fat beneath their skin to keep them warm and their body temperature control mechanism may be weaker. Their body may not be able to appropriately respond to the cold weather," the spokesman said.

Some senior persons may have decreased mobility, which can in turn slow down their ability to generate and conserve body heat. Chronic illnesses, such as hypertension, diabetes and endocrine disorders, may undermine the health of elderly people and lower their metabolic rate, subsequently causing their body to generate less heat.

The CHP reminds the public, in particular the elderly and persons with chronic illnesses, to adopt the following preventive measures:

- Take note of the weather forecast. Wear warm clothing, including hats, scarves, gloves and socks accordingly;
- Consume sufficient food to ensure adequate calorie intake;
- Perform regular exercise to facilitate blood circulation and heat production;
- Stay in a warm environment and avoid prolonged outdoor exposure;
- Use heaters with care and maintain adequate indoor ventilation; and
- Seek medical advice if feeling unwell.

In addition, the public should avoid alcoholic beverages.

"Drinking alcohol cannot keep you warm. Alcohol accelerates the loss of body heat through dilated blood vessels, resulting in chilling instead," the spokesman said.

"Parents should ensure that babies are sufficiently warm, but it is also important to keep babies lightly clothed to avoid overheating them," the spokesman added.

Parents should observe the following safety measures when putting their children to bed:

- Keep the room well ventilated and with a comfortable temperature;
- Always place babies on their back to sleep. Babies usually sleep well without a pillow;
- Place babies on a firm and well-fitted mattress to sleep. Avoid soft objects and loose bedding;
- Leave their head, face and arms uncovered during sleep; and
- Let babies sleep in a cot placed in the parents' room and near their bed.

Members of the public are advised to take heed of the following advice to reduce the risk of getting influenza and respiratory tract infections:

- Maintain adequate rest, a balanced diet and regular physical activity, and avoid stress and do not smoke;
- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Maintain good hand hygiene via proper handwashing or use of alcohol-based handrub;
- Ensure good ventilation;
- Wear a face mask in the event of influenza-like symptoms, while taking care of patients and when visiting hospitals or clinics;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper in a lidded rubbish bin and wash hands immediately afterwards;
- Seek medical advice when feeling unwell, and stay at home;
- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination, which is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications; and
- Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and persons aged 50 to 64, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination early. Please see details of the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme on the CHP's [website](#).

Food-borne diseases, particularly those linked to hot pot cuisine, are also common in cold weather. The following preventive measures should be taken:

- Wash hands before handling and consuming food;
- Do not patronise unlicensed vendors or those with poor hygienic standards while selecting food;
- Wash and cook all food thoroughly;
- Vegetables should be washed thoroughly in clean running water before cooking and consumption. When appropriate, scrub vegetables with hard surfaces with a clean brush to remove dirt and substances, including pesticide residues and contaminants, from the surface and crevices;
- Shrimps should be fully cooked by cooking them until the shells turn red and the flesh turns white and opaque;
- For shellfish like scallops and geoduck, scrub the shells thoroughly and remove internal organs;
- Most hot pot ingredients should be stored in a refrigerator at 4 degrees Celsius or below, while frozen food should be stored in a freezer at -18 degrees C or below;

- Never use raw eggs as a dipping sauce for hot pot; and
- Use different sets of chopsticks to handle raw and cooked food to avoid cross-contamination.

In addition, the public should not use charcoal as cooking fuel in poorly ventilated areas, especially indoors, to avoid harmful exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) and prevent CO poisoning. While using other kinds of fuel, the public should also ensure adequate ventilation.

For more health information, the public may call the DH's Health Education Hotline (2833 0111) or visit the [CHP's website](#) and [Facebook Fanpage](#).

The public may also call Dial-a-Weather (1878 200) or visit the website of the [Hong Kong Observatory](#) for the latest weather information and forecast, or its page on [Weather Information for Senior Citizens](#).

Employers and employees should take precautions during cold weather

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals when the Cold Weather Warning is in force:

The Labour Department reminds employers that as the Cold Weather Warning is in force, they should take appropriate precautions such as reminding employees who have to work outdoors or in remote areas to wear appropriately warm clothing, and make arrangements for employees to rotate from outdoor to indoor or sheltered work sites as far as possible. Employees should take note of the weather report, wear appropriately warm clothing and be mindful of their health conditions. They should notify their supervisors and seek medical help immediately if feeling unwell, such as having cold limbs and body shivering.

DSD continues to provide basic and limited public services next week

In view of the extension of the special work arrangements for government departments, the Drainage Services Department (DSD) announced today (February

15) that it will continue to maintain its emergency and essential public services, and will provide basic and limited public services to members of the public next week (until February 23), including the 24-hour DSD Drainage Hotline, the inspection of drainage records and the handling of Sewage Charges/Trade Effluent Surcharge matters. The public are advised to minimise their usage of the above services unless under emergency or necessary situations. The public are also advised that the handling time of the above services would be longer than usual.

Except for the 24-hour Drainage Hotline (2300 1110), all enquiry phone lines and reception services will be suspended temporarily.

The opening hours for inspection of drainage records will be maintained on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 10am to noon and from 2pm to 4pm.

The number of offices which provide limited receipt and dispatch services will be reduced to the four locations below, with opening hours on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 10am to noon and from 2pm to 4pm:

- 43/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong
- 12/F, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Kowloon
- 23/F, 1063 King's Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong
- G/F, Western Magistracy Building, 2A Pok Fu Lam Road, Hong Kong

Deposit boxes will be available at the above four locations and at the gate of Shatin Sewage Treatment Works outside the opening hours for document reception.

DSD facilities will also be temporarily closed for public visits or other educational purposes until further notice.

[SCMA speaks on assisting Hong Kong people in Hubei](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, after attending a radio programme this morning (February 15):

Reporter: Regarding the 10 confirmed patients, according to the information in Wuhan, the Government has been late in announcing their confirmation. What is the latest situation? Secondly, about the people stranded in Hubei Province, how long can the Government arrange the first batch of them? How many quarantine sites you are looking for to keep them?

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs: As regards to the 10 confirmed cases of Hong Kong people in Hubei, our priority is to offer the necessary assistance and support to them upon receipt of the requests. Specifically, our colleagues in Wuhan Economic and Trade Office have rendered assistance to them in securing hospital places and ensuring that they receive medical treatment in local hospitals. In announcing the relevant information, it has been our principle that we will do it in an open and transparent way. So, for information related to the situation in Hong Kong, such as the measures which we have introduced, the confirmed cases in Hong Kong, the contact tracing information, etc, we will provide them in the daily briefing. So we have not announced the information concerning the confirmed cases outside Hong Kong, but should there be an interest or concern, we will be happy to do so.

As regards to the operation to take those Hong Kong people stranded in Hubei back to Hong Kong, we have been making the necessary assessments and planning from day one upon receipt of the requests. It is important that we can secure quarantine centres of sufficient capacity so that when they return to Hong Kong, they would be subject to this quarantine arrangement. Given that the total number of Hong Kong people in Hubei (who have sought assistance) is more than 2,200, obviously we have to do it by batches. For each batch, I think we are talking about 150 to 200 people. That means we have to ensure that upon their return to Hong Kong, we have this size of quarantine facilities available. That is why I appeal to society to give support, and also for those districts where the quarantine centres will be placed, I hope they would understand and give their support so that we can secure these arrangements. Hence, we can talk to the local authorities in Hubei and make the (return) arrangement as early as possible. Our objective is to do it as quickly as possible. When we are ready, of course we would provide more details and information to all of you.

Reporter: About the 10 confirmed cases in Hubei, when did you learn about them and when did you announce it?

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs: I think it is within days. My point is that it is not our practice to make such announcements because all the announcements we made are concerned with information related to fighting against the disease. We focus on the information related to the Hong Kong situation. That is why we do it in the daily briefing. But surely if there is concern or interest in such information, we would be happy to provide that.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

AFCD's special work arrangements continued

In light of the extension of special work arrangements for government departments, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced today (February 15) that licensing services counters at Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices and the Marine Parks Office at CDW Building, 388 Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan, will continue to provide basic and limited public services to members of the public on Tuesday and Thursday, from 9.30am to noon and 2pm to 5pm, until further notice.

The AFCD appeals to the public to use the above counter services only when in urgent need. Members of the public are encouraged to handle their licence or permit applications through email, post or fax. Relevant documents can also be put in the drop-in box placed at the ground floor of Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices. For detailed information and contacts, please refer to the AFCD website: www.afcd.gov.hk.

Moreover, the provision of anti-rabies dog inoculations and dog licensing services conducted by the Animal Management Centres under the AFCD will continue to be provided on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, from 9.30am to noon and 2pm to 4.30pm, whereas all other Anti-Rabies Dog Inoculation and Licensing Centres will continue be closed until further notice. For details, please visit the designated website: www.pets.gov.hk.

Meanwhile, AFCD public facilities will remain temporarily closed.

For enquiries, please call the AFCD on 2708 8885.