

CHP investigates six additional cases of novel coronavirus infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 8pm yesterday (February 10), the CHP is investigating six additional cases of novel coronavirus infection, taking to 42 the number of confirmed cases so far in Hong Kong.

Two of the additional cases are the close contacts of the male patient of the 27th case announced on February 9. The patients are a 55-year-old woman and a 52-year-old man who are respectively the aunt and uncle of the male patient of the 27th case. The two patients have good past health and did not have any travel history during the incubation period. On January 26, they both attended the same gathering as the patients of the nine confirmed cases from the same family cluster announced yesterday.

The 55-year-old female patient lives in Tai Wo House, Wo Che Estate in Sha Tin. She developed fever, cough and runny nose on January 30 and consulted a private doctor on the same day. She was admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH) on February 9. Her respiratory sample was tested positive for novel coronavirus. She is now in a stable condition. Her husband is asymptomatic and is under quarantine while her son has developed symptoms and is admitted to the PWH for isolation and treatment.

The 52-year-old male patient belongs to the same family cluster. He is the husband of a 51-year-old female patient and is the father of a 25-year-old female and a 22-year-old male patients confirmed on February 9. He lives in Lai Chi building, 42-56 Leighton Road in Wan Chai. He developed cough, sore throat and dry mouth since February 8. He was admitted to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) for management on February 9. His respiratory sample was tested positive for novel coronavirus. He is now in a stable condition.

The other three cases belong to another family cluster. The index case is a 69-year-old man with underlying illnesses who resides in Cheung Hing Building, 110 Sai Wan Ho Street. He developed cough since January 30 and consulted a private doctor on February 7. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department at PYNEH on February 9 due to shortness of breath and was admitted for isolation and management. His respiratory sample was tested positive for novel coronavirus. He is now in a critical condition.

Based on the epidemiological investigations of this case, the CHP has traced and confirmed two more cases of novel coronavirus infection yesterday, namely the 63-year-old wife and 86-year-old mother-in-law of the 69-year-old man. All of them live together. His wife has underlying illnesses while his mother-in-law enjoys good past health. They presented with cough since January 30 and January 28 respectively. They were transferred to PYNEH for isolation and management yesterday by the CHP. Their respiratory samples were

tested positive for novel coronavirus. They are now in a stable condition.

According to the 69-year-old male patient's information, he had no travel history during the incubation period. He mainly stayed at home. The 63-year-old female patient had been to Sai Wan Ho General Out-patient Clinic on January 31. His sister-in-law had been to their home for lunch on January 31, but have been asymptomatic so far and quarantine will be arranged.

The taxi driver who drove the patient and his wife from Cheung Hing Building, Sai Wan Ho to PYNEH at around noon on February 9 is urged to call the CHP hotline.

The sixth additional case involves a 62-year-old woman residing in the same building as for the patient of the 12th case, i.e. Hong Mei House, Cheung Hong Estate in Tsing Yi. She developed cough since February 3 and consulted a private doctor on February 3, 5 and 7. She sought treatment at Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) on February 9 where she was admitted for isolation and management. Her respiratory sample was tested positive for novel coronavirus. She is in stable condition.

According to the patient's information, she visited Macao from January 18 to 19. Her son and daughter-in-law who lived with her have presented with symptoms and will be sent to PMH, and quarantine will be arranged for her husband and grandson who lived with her and are asymptomatic.

The taxi driver who drove the patient from her home to PMH at around 2pm on February 9 is urged to call the CHP hotline.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "According to our preliminary epidemiological investigations, some of the confirmed cases are believed to be 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's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. The CHP is also closely monitoring and following up on the contact tracing of relevant confirmed cases in the Mainland and overseas. 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.

The CHP has set up a hotline (2125 1122) for public enquiries. The hotline operates from 8am to midnight daily. As at 4pm yesterday, a total of 9 489 calls were received.

A dedicated webpage (www.gov.hk/ncv) has been set up by the CHP. Information including the latest local situation, list of buildings and list of flights/trains/ships relevant to the confirmed cases, countries/areas with reported cases as well as health advice and a "Novel Coronavirus Infection Local Situation Interactive Map Dashboard" are available on the webpage 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.

The public should take heed of the health advice below when travelling outside Hong Kong:

- Do not travel to Hubei Province where community transmission of novel coronavirus is occurring;

- Avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms in countries/areas with possible community transmission of novel coronavirus infection. If it is unavoidable to come into contact with them, put on a surgical mask and continue to do so until 14 days after returning to Hong Kong;
 - Avoid visiting hospitals. If it is necessary to visit a hospital, put on a surgical mask and observe strict personal and hand hygiene;
 - Avoid touching animals (including game), poultry/birds or their droppings;
 - Avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms;
 - Avoid making close contact with patients, especially those with symptoms of acute respiratory infections;
 - Do not consume game meat and do not patronise food premises where game meat is served;
 - Adhere to food safety and hygiene rules such as avoiding consuming raw or undercooked animal products, including milk, eggs and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or contaminated products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled;
 - If feeling unwell when outside Hong Kong, especially if experiencing a fever or cough, wear a surgical mask, inform the hotel staff or tour escort and seek medical advice at once; and
 - After returning to Hong Kong, consult a doctor promptly if experiencing a fever or other symptoms, take the initiative to inform the doctor of any recent travel history and any exposure to animals, and wear a surgical mask to help prevent spread of the disease.
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Protection under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance for employees contracting the Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent in the course of work

In response to media reports that employees, including medical staff, would not be entitled to protection under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (ECO) if they contract the Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent (novel coronavirus), a Government spokesman made the following clarification today (February 10):

According to ECO, if an employee sustains an injury or dies as a result of an accident arising out of and in the course of his employment, or suffers from an occupational disease prescribed by ECO, his employer is in general liable to pay compensation under ECO. Although Severe Respiratory Disease

associated with a Novel Infectious Agent is not a prescribed occupational disease under ECO, section 36 of ECO stipulates that an employee may still claim compensation under the Ordinance for a disease if it is a personal injury by accident arising out of and in the course of employment.

If an employee contracts or suspects having contracted novel coronavirus by accident arising out of and in the course of his employment, he should inform his employer immediately so that his employer can notify the Labour Department (LD) of the injury. If the employee has doubt as to whether his employer has reported the injury to LD, he could approach the Employees' Compensation Division of LD direct.

For government employees, if an employee contracts novel coronavirus by accident arising out of and in the course of his employment, the Government, as the employer, will make compensation in accordance with the relevant legislation (including ECO or the relevant pensions legislation) and terms of appointment.

The LD understands that there are proposals to amend the law in the community and is looking into this issue. Nonetheless, in prescribing a new occupational disease, we have to clearly specify in the legislation what industries and processes in which the employees are engaged have definite risks posed by the disease, as well as the prescribed period within which the employees must have been employed to work in those industries and processes. As the outbreak situation of novel coronavirus is still developing, the legislative amendment can only be made when definite medical and epidemiological information is available. In the process, it is also necessary to discuss the details with stakeholders, including the insurance sector and employees and employers of related industries. The LD will closely monitor the above developments and consult stakeholders about the legislative amendments in due course.

HA adjusts service provision to focus on combatting epidemic

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (February 10) announced that it planned to adjust public hospital non-emergency services and non-essential services gradually in the coming four weeks to focus manpower and resources in light of the challenge of the epidemic.

The HA Central Command Committee reviewed the latest epidemic situation and decided that public hospital services need to be adjusted to focus on emergency and essential services, including the management of the epidemic

and other urgent clinical services.

HA Chief Manager (Cluster Performance) Dr Ian Cheung said, "The next few weeks will be the critical time for the fight against the novel coronavirus. Service curtailment can reduce the flow of people in the hospitals and reduce the risk of cross infection. It will also allow healthcare staff to focus on the epidemic and strengthen the implementation of infection control measures."

"The specialist outpatient clinics (SOPCs) of public hospital will gradually reduce the services. For instance, Ear, Nose and Throat specialty will provide consultations only to post operation follow up and cancer cases required surveillance. SOPCs will contact patients with stable condition and mild illnesses to reschedule the appointments and arrange drug refill," Dr Cheung said.

"Emergency surgery services will be maintained. Elective surgeries will be postponed except for essential surgeries for cancer treatment. Appointments for non-emergency and routine clinical examinations such as endoscopy and gastroscopy will also be rescheduled."

At the same time, the HA is also discussing with several private hospitals on various Public-Private Partnership Programmes. Public hospitals will divert patients from public hospitals for treatment in private hospitals at the current fees charged by public hospitals. Initial agreement has been reached in the provision of neonatal jaundice treatment.

Dr Cheung hopes the public could be emphatic towards the need for the service adjustment arrangements and apologises to the affected patients.

Correctional officer stops remand person in custody committing self-harm

A Correctional officer stopped a male remand person in custody from committing self-harm behaviour by drinking cleaning solvent in Pik Uk Correctional Institution today (February 10).

At 2.57pm today, while preparing for cleaning the dayroom, a 18-year-old male remand person in custody suddenly drank a small quantity of cleaning solvent. The officer immediately stopped him and sent him to the centre hospital for treatment. Upon receiving examination and treatment from the institution medical officer, he was sent to a public hospital for further examination and treatment.

A clinical psychologist of the department will follow up on the case.

â€‹ A spokesman for the Correctional Services Department said, "The department uses all possible measures to prevent persons in its custody from attempting suicide or self-harm. These measures include administrative arrangements, the improvement of institution facilities, staff training and first aid services."

â€‹ The remand person in custody was remanded for the offence of counterfeiting notes or coins with intent in February 2020.

Government responds to media enquiries on legislating on mask supply and prices

In response to media enquiries relating to legislating on the supply and prices of surgical masks, a Government spokesman said the following today (February 10):

For the supply of surgical masks, the Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to procure surgical masks globally through different channels and means. These include the Government Logistics Department procuring directly from suppliers and through referrals from the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices and from individual sources in order to secure the supply of masks and other protective items as soon as possible to meet the needs of the Government operation. At the same time, the Government prioritises the distribution of surgical masks of the Government stock in accordance with the risk level. Priority is given to healthcare workers and personnel providing care services (including front-line healthcare workers, nursing staff in institutions, healthcare personnel in private clinics); and personnel who provide essential services and who are required to have contact with the public at work (such as those providing public transport, emergency services and immigration services). In addition to imports, the Government strives to explore prospects of local production. The Correctional Services Department has also increased its production volume. The Government is maintaining close contact with members of local chambers of commerce and the retail industry and collaborating with the Mainland Authorities to facilitate clearance so as to speed up their delivery to the market.

Given experts' assessment that the virus may last for a period of time and that there are confirmed cases in various countries and regions, the demand for surgical masks has risen sharply, causing difficulties in procurement. As the supply of surgical masks is tight in the short run, the Government considers that it is more pragmatic to strive to increase supply of surgical masks and manage the demand. The Government currently does not

have any plans to mandatorily control the supply and prices of surgical masks through legislation, because this could be counterproductive, rather than addressing the problem at source, i.e. inadequate supply.

The Government appeals to members of the public to go out less often and reduce social contact in accordance with experts' advice. The Government announced a package of measures to reduce need for people from gathering and contacting. They include extending the suspension of classes, arranging some employees of the Government to work at home and appealing to employers to make flexible work arrangements for their employees in accordance with their operational needs, closing some of the government facilities such as leisure and cultural facilities and suspending recreation and sports programmes, as well as adjusting services under the Social Welfare Department's subvention.

Besides, according to the recommendations of the Centre for Health Protection, although surgical masks can effectively prevent the spread of virus, the public should also pay attention to personal hygiene other than wearing surgical masks. Members of the public should perform hand hygiene more frequently especially if they are not wearing surgical masks. When hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing, they should wash their hands with liquid soap and dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin.