

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

The People's Bank of China will issue Renminbi Bills through the Central Moneymarkets Unit of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) will issue Renminbi Bills through the Central Moneymarkets Unit of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA). Please find attached the tender notice and the tender information memorandum of the Renminbi Bills to be issued by the PBOC. Please also find attached the tender-related information provided by the Issuing and Lodging Agent through the HKMA.

Serious impact on public hospital services

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for Hospital Authority (HA) made the following announcement today (February 7).

As a large number of staff members are anticipated to be absent from duty, emergency services in public hospitals will be affected to a certain extent today.

All public hospital Accident & Emergency Department can only focus their limited number of staff on duty to the provision of emergency services. The HA appeals to patients with mild condition to seek consultation at private hospitals and doctors.

Specialist Outpatient Clinics can only provide limited services and patients are advised to reschedule their appointments by contacting the clinics. Patients can go to the clinics to refill their drugs if required.

In the interest of patients, the HA appeals to all healthcare workers who have not yet reported for duty to return to work the soonest to provide the patient services in need.

The HA thanked the staff who have stayed on duty to maintain emergency services as far as possible.

CHP investigates cluster of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (February 6) investigating a cluster of Legionnaires' disease (LD) cases, involving six patients, and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems and that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

Further to the CHP's announcements of a cluster of LD cases respectively on February 1 and 3 involving four male patients and one female patient aged from 66 to 79, one additional LD case has been recorded.

The male patient, aged 84 with underlying illness, lives in Kam Wan House, Choi Hung Estate, Kwun Tong. The patient's sample tested positive for *Legionella pneumophila*.

"Epidemiological investigations revealed that the patient had no travel history in the incubation period (IP). Officers of the CHP has conducted a site visit at Choi Hung Estate and has already collected environmental and water samples. Investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection including poor maintenance of water systems leading to

stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm

filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and

- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:

1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Safeguarding safety of frontline staff with continuous enhancement of epidemic control measures

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (February 6) met with staff union representatives and reiterated the importance attached to the safety of staff and their concerns about protective equipment and isolation facilities amid the worsening epidemic of novel coronavirus pneumonia.

The HA Chief Executive Officer, Dr Tony Ko pointed out that since the beginning of the epidemic, additional resources have been allocated to the procurement of supplies and enhancement of infection control measures to keep up with the latest situation.

"Since the activation of Emergency Response Level by the HA, public hospitals have correspondingly enhanced infection control measures, leading to significant increase in the consumption of personal protective equipment. The global supply is currently tight for protective equipment such as masks, eye shields and protective clothing. The HA understands the concerns of frontline staff and will try the best to expedite the procurement of protective equipment for patient care."

In terms of isolation facilities, public hospitals have gradually converted the reserve isolation beds according to operational needs. The number of isolation beds has increased from 500 at the beginning of the epidemic to over 800 isolation beds, with the current utilisation rate of 42

per cent.

In addition, to reduce the risk of general wards, the HA has earlier extended the "Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance" programme to all pneumonia inpatients for early identification of novel coronavirus pneumonia patients.

"In view of staff concerns towards patients withholding travel history, the HA can also confirm patients' record of leaving and entering the territory with the support of the Immigration Department beginning today."

"There have been more local cases of infection in Hong Kong. Public hospitals count on the concerted effort of staff members to fight the epidemic. The HA hopes that employees involved in industrial action will return to work as soon as possible to join hands to combat the epidemic. The HA promised to treat all staff members absent from duty fairly with the same compassionate, reasonable and legal grounds," Dr Ko added.

The Chief Manager of Cluster Performance, Dr Ian Cheung said that the ongoing industrial actions continue to severely affect public hospital services, including a number of emergency and essential medical services.

As at 7pm today, about 5 000 employees were absent from duty, including about 220 doctors, 3 000 nurses and 900 allied health professionals. The more seriously affected departments include Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Accident & Emergency Department and elective surgeries.

The HA Major Incident Control Centre will continue to closely monitor the operation of public hospitals. The HA will also continue to communicate with staff members and sincerely thanks colleagues staying on duty to work together to fight the epidemic.