

CHP reminds public on precautions against cold weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 31) 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.

CHP investigates two additional cases of novel coronavirus infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (January 31) investigating two additional cases of novel coronavirus

infection. The public is again urged to maintain strict personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel.

The first case involves a 37-year-old woman residing in the Coronation in Yau Ma Tei who is the daughter of the patients of the 9th and 10th case. She developed cough on January 28 and was sent to Queen Elizabeth Hospital yesterday (January 30) where she was admitted for isolation and management. She is in stable condition. The patient's respiratory sample was tested positive for novel coronavirus.

The CHP has immediately commenced epidemiological investigations and conducted relevant contact tracing. According to the information the patient provided, she stayed at W Hong Kong with her parents from January 22 to 28 and then visited The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong and Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong along with her parents. She returned home after accompanying her parents to Queen Mary Hospital on January 28. Preliminary investigations revealed that she neither visited any wet market or seafood market, nor had any exposure to wild animals or poultry during the incubation period.

The second case involves a 75-year-old man residing in Hong Mei House, Cheung Hong Estate in Tsing Yi. He developed cough and shortness of breath on January 22. He sought treatment at Princess Margaret Hospital on January 24 and was admitted for management. His respiratory sample was tested positive for novel coronavirus yesterday under enhanced laboratory surveillance. He is now in a stable condition and being treated in isolation at Princess Margaret Hospital.

According to the patient's information, he visited Shunde in Guangdong Province from December 30 last year to January 7 this year and sought treatment at a clinic there. He took day trips to Macao from January 10 to 14. His wife, daughter and son are asymptomatic and will be transferred to Lady MacLehose Holiday Village for quarantine. The CHP is following up on relevant contact tracing. Investigations are ongoing.

The CHP will report the cases to the World Health Organization, National Health Commission, Health Commission of Guangdong Province and the health authority of Macao.

So far, 12 confirmed cases are reported in Hong Kong. The CHP is continuing its epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing. The CHP is also closely monitoring a number of overseas cases and conducting related contact tracing.

The CHP today received verification of a case confirmed on January 26 by the health authority of Taiwan and noted that the patient took the flight CZ3097 by China Southern Airlines from Guangzhou to Taipei on January 25. A Hong Kong resident on the same flight is regarded as a close contact of the confirmed case.

Quarantine will be arranged for close contacts while medical surveillance will be arranged for other contacts. The Lady MacLehose Holiday

Village under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department has been converted as quarantine centre and close contacts would be transferred to the village for quarantine. For the progress on the contact tracing of the cases, please see annex.

The CHP has set up a hotline (2125 1122) for the cases, which operates from 8am to 9pm daily to answer public enquiries. As at 4pm yesterday, a total of 1 663 calls were received.

A dedicated webpage (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html) has been set up by the CHP to provide relevant information and health advice on Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent. Information of the latest notifications received from the Mainland and overseas will be updated to the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/statistics_of_the_cases_novel_coronavirus_infection_en.pdf) daily at 9am and 6pm to help the public grasp information on the affected countries/areas.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "The CHP will continue to maintain its liaison with the National Health Commission, the World Health Organization and the relevant health authorities, and closely monitor the situation for risk assessment."

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;
- 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. If it is unavoidable to travel to such places, put on a surgical mask and continue to do so until 14 days after returning to Hong Kong, and self-isolate for 14 days as far as possible. For those returning from other parts of the Mainland, they are advised to stay home for 14 days upon their return as far as possible. Those who need to go out should wear a surgical mask;
 - 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.
-

[Hong Kong Customs seizes 68 000 surgical masks with suspected false manufacturing date](#)

Hong Kong Customs today (January 30) seized a total of 68 000 surgical masks with suspected false manufacturing date from a pharmacy in Mong Kok. The seized items carry an estimated market value of about \$380,000. A person-in-charge of the pharmacy was arrested.

Customs officers launched a large-scale territory-wide special operation

codenamed "Guardian" on January 27 to inspect retail spots in different districts that sell surgical masks. Customs officers today received information alleging that a pharmacy in Mong Kok sold surgical masks with suspected false manufacturing date. Officers took immediate action and went to a pharmacy located on Nelson Street, where they seized a batch of surgical masks with suspected false manufacturing date of March 2020. A 27-year-old male person-in-charge of the pharmacy was arrested.

The surgical masks were packed in boxes with each contained 50 pieces and were sold at \$280.

Customs will look into the sources of the seizure. Samples will also be sent to the Government Laboratory for safety test.

Customs attaches great importance to the trade description and safety aspects of surgical masks. The "Guardian" operation has been lasting for four days with over 1 300 retail spots selling surgical masks were inspected.

The special operation is ongoing and the department will continue to make immediate announcements if any irregularities are spotted.

Customs reminds members of the public to observe the following tips when purchasing surgical masks:

- Pay attention to the information on the packages, including the manufacturing and expiry dates;
- Check the surgical masks to see if any dirt or trace of being used before making purchases;
- Check with the shopkeepers immediately when there is any doubt; and
- Purchase at reputable shops;

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO), any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, or sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO), it is an offence to supply, manufacture or import into Hong Kong consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirements for consumer goods. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years on subsequent conviction.

Customs has all along attached great importance to public safety and consumer rights. Law enforcement action will be taken immediately if any violation of the TDO or the CGSO is detected.

Customs sternly reminds traders not to take advantage of the situation and sell products with false origins or false trademarks, or unsafe consumer goods. Immediate enforcement action will be taken and prosecution will be made with sufficient evidence if any trader is found doing the above act.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TD0 or the CGS0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk). Customs will look into every report and take necessary follow-up.

Government increases supply of surgical masks through multi-pronged approach

In response to widespread public concern and anxiety about the supply of surgical masks in Hong Kong, a Government spokesman today (January 30) said that owing to the spread of disease which gives rise to keen global demand, the supply of surgical masks is expected to remain tight in the short term. The spokesman stressed that the Government has been working proactively to increase the overall supply of surgical masks with a multi-pronged approach.

Given the assessment by experts that the disease may last for a period of time and that there are confirmed cases in various countries and districts, the demand for surgical masks has risen sharply, causing difficulties in procurement. As the supply of surgical masks is tight in the short term, experts have advised the Government to continue the measures to minimise contacts among people and take a risk-based approach by prioritising the distribution of surgical masks to the personnel in need, in particular healthcare workers.

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, convened the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee cum Command Centre in relation to the Novel Coronavirus today. Having regard to the advice of experts, the Steering Committee cum Command Centre considered that it is necessary to prioritise the supply of surgical masks. Priority should be given to healthcare workers and personnel providing care services (including front-line healthcare workers, nursing staff in institutions, healthcare personnel in private clinics); people who provide essential services and need to contact the public at work (such as those providing public transport, emergency services and immigration services) and other members of the public with practical needs. Other members of the public should go out less and pay attention to personal hygiene, minimising the need to use surgical masks.

The Steering Committee cum Command Centre has reviewed the work of various government departments and the Hospital Authority (HA) in relation to the supply of surgical masks.

(1) All relevant government departments and the HA has all along maintained a certain number of masks as stockpile. Their consumption rate over the past

month, however, was five to six times the previous rate owing to the disease outbreak. The current stockpile of surgical masks kept by the Government Logistics Department (GLD) can meet the operational needs of all relevant government departments, in particular front-line officers (such as staff members of the Department of Health, the Immigration Department and the Customs and Excise Department, as well as ambulancemen of the Fire Services Department), for about one to two months. The HA's current stockpile of surgical masks, taking into account the orders placed, is adequate for about three months' consumption, although the stockpile has diminished owing to the increased consumption rate recently. The stockpile of the care centres is even less. The Government has proactively increased the overall supply. The GLD is sourcing globally and has contacted more than 220 suppliers from over 10 countries. It strives to remove all the unnecessary procedures provided that the quality of masks will not be compromised. The economic and trade offices outside Hong Kong are in parallel identifying suppliers of surgical masks in their respective regions. Nearly five million surgical masks which the Government has ordered over the past month has been delivered to Hong Kong since last week.

(2) On the supply of masks in the market, 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. The Government has also contacted the Hong Kong-invested mask suppliers in the Mainland, requesting for an enhanced production of surgical masks for Hong Kong. Their response is positive in general. Since mid-January, the Government has, through the collaboration of the customs authorities in the two places, facilitated a supply of nearly eight million surgical masks, which have arrived or will soon arrive in Hong Kong. It is also rendering assistance to another batch involving more than 24 million masks to be delivered to Hong Kong. The Government will continue to liaise with the relevant Mainland departments. It appeals to retailers to arrange for the sales of surgical masks to the public at a usual price level as soon as possible upon their delivery to Hong Kong.

(3) In addition to imports, the Government strives to explore local production. The Correctional Services Department will try to extend production to 24 hours, increasing the production from 1.1 million to 1.8 million per month. The Government has also contacted the only local producer of surgical masks, which has already enhanced the overall outputs from 800 000 a month to 1.6 million. The Government would welcome merchants to relocate the production lines to Hong Kong to increase local supply. The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will provide full facilitation;

(4) Recently, some surgical masks have been donated by some private organisations to the HA and a small quantity was donated to the Government. As regards these donated masks, the Labour and Welfare Bureau will later liaise with non-governmental organisations to help distribute to the people in need through such channels as food banks. The Government appeals for more donation of surgical masks by private organisations and it will arrange to distribute them to people in need;

(5) The Government has identified some small-scale surgical mask suppliers and will help organisations in need to procure from them. For example, the Government is getting in touch with the Hong Kong Medical Association to help private clinics procure surgical masks from those suppliers;

(6) Meanwhile, the Customs and Excise Department is conducting large-scale territory-wide special operations to combat surgical masks with false origin claims, non-compliance with consumer goods safety standards and false trademarks to protect safety and rights of the public. In the operation today, customs officers seized a batch of surgical masks with suspected false trade descriptions in a drug store in Mong Kok and an arrest was made. The Customs and Excise Department will continue the operations.

During the period when the supply of masks is still tight, 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 prevent people from gathering and contacting. They include extending the Chinese New Year holidays of all schools in Hong Kong, 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 subsidised by the Social Welfare Department. The Steering Committee cum Command Centre will actively consider maintaining the above-mentioned measures before the short supply of masks has been alleviated, and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

The Government spokesman pointed out that according to the recommendations of the Centre for Health Protection, although surgical masks can effectively prevent the spread of disease, the public should also pay attention to personal hygiene in addition to wearing surgical masks. Members of the public should perform hand hygiene more frequently especially if they were 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.

The spokesman expressed that the Government fully understood and will do its best to respond to public concerns about the supply of surgical masks. Regarding the rumours that the Government had hoarded a large number of surgical masks; the Home Affairs Department would distribute surgical masks; or even that the Chief Executive had approved the transfer of surgical masks to the Mainland authorities, the spokesman solemnly clarified that there was absolutely no truth in them. The spokesman stressed that the Government will always take the health of Hong Kong people as the first consideration. At this critical moment, the Government urges the public to unite and do their best in disease prevention and control measures without being misled by rumours. The Government also once again expresses its sincere gratitude to the front-line healthcare and emergency services staff who have always been standing fast at their posts at this critical moment.