

# CHP reminds public on precautions against cold weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 28) 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](#).

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## **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.

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## **Government's response to media enquiries**

Regarding an online post saying that the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, agrees to "a request to make use of Hong Kong's medical system to help

the country tackle the disease", a Government spokesman today (January 28) said that the post is unfounded.

The Chief Executive is leading the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government in its all-out effort to tackle the outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus. She activated the Emergency Response Level on January 25 and announced a series of measures, including indefinitely suspending flight and high-speed train services to and from Wuhan of the Hubei Province. The Government further announced on January 26 the restriction of Hubei Province residents and persons who have visited Hubei Province in the past 14 days from entering Hong Kong. In parallel, the Government is studying measures to further reduce people flow between Hong Kong and the Mainland to lower the chances of infected persons entering Hong Kong.

The HKSAR Government regrets over the spread of the rumour. As the situation is severe now, the HKSAR Government appeals to the public to fight against the disease together, and pay close attention to the information disseminated by the Government so as not to be misled by rumours.

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## Closure of the facilities of the Antiquities and Monuments Office from tomorrow

To tie in with the response level under the "Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance" being raised to Emergency Response Level and avoid people from gathering, the Antiquities and Monuments Office announces today (January 28) to close its venues from tomorrow (January 29) until further notice. The venues to be closed include Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, Ping Shan Tang Clan Gallery cum Heritage Trail Visitors Centre, Tai Fu Tai in San Tin, Old House of Wong Uk Village in Shatin, No. 10 San Wai in Wong Chuk Hang, the Fortified Structure at Ha Pak Nai, the Wun Yiu Exhibition at the Sheung Wun Yiu Village and the Information Centres of Tung Chung Fort on Lantau Island and Tung Lung Fort on Tung Lung Chau in Sai Kung. All educational activities and docent services will be cancelled during the closure period.

For enquiries, please call the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 2208 4400.

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# Temporary closure of LCSD facilities from tomorrow

To tie in with the response level under the "Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance" being raised to Emergency Response Level and avoid people from gathering, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 28) that the following LCSD cultural and leisure facilities will be temporarily closed from tomorrow (January 29) and recreational, sports and cultural programmes held at these venues will be cancelled until further notice.

Land sports facilities and aquatic facilities temporarily closed include all sports centres, sports grounds, grass pitches, artificial turf soccer pitches, tennis courts, squash courts, bowling greens, golf facilities, public swimming pools, beaches, Tuen Mun Recreation and Sports Centre, water sports centres and holiday camps. Cultural facilities include all museums, performance venues, public libraries and their study rooms, mobile libraries, and music centres of the Music Office.

Refund arrangements will be announced later by the department.