

Update on dengue fever

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 10) reported the latest number of dengue fever (DF) cases, and strongly urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From January 3 to 9, the CHP recorded four imported DF cases. The patients had respectively been to the Philippines (three cases) and Thailand (one case) during the incubation period.

As of January 9, a total of four cases of DF had been recorded in 2020, all of which were imported cases. In 2019, 198 cases were recorded (comprising 197 imported cases and one local case), as compared with 163 cases recorded in 2018. The imported cases in 2019 were mainly from Thailand (34), Malaysia (27) and the Philippines (25).

The CHP has been closely monitoring the latest DF situation in neighbouring and overseas areas. DF is endemic in many tropical and subtropical areas of the world. According to the World Health Organization, some Asian countries were experiencing unusually high numbers of DF cases in 2019. The numbers of cases in some countries were significantly higher than the numbers in 2018, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Separately, according to the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, as of November 30 last year, a total of 5 986 cases had been recorded in Guangdong in 2019, which was significantly higher than that in the same period in 2018 (3 250 cases). In Taiwan, 640 cases (including 100 local cases) had been recorded in 2019 and as of yesterday, seven imported cases (none local) have been recorded in 2020.

Detailed information on the latest DF situation in Hong Kong as well as neighbouring and overseas countries and areas has been uploaded to the CHP's website

(www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/df_imported_cases_and_overseas_figures_eng.pdf).

Members of the public should stay vigilant and carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures.

“Apart from [general measures](#), travellers returning from areas affected by DF should apply insect repellent for 14 days upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor,” a spokesman for the CHP said.

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and drains to prevent blockage;
- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent

compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;

- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;
- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or uncovered areas of the body when doing outdoor activities.

DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;
- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Re-apply only when needed and follow the instructions.

* For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

The public should call 1823 in case of mosquito problems and may visit the following pages for more information: the DF page of the [CHP](#) and the [Travel Health Service](#), the latest [Travel Health News](#), [tips for using insect repellents](#), and the CHP [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

[Employment agency convicted of overcharging foreign domestic helper](#)

A licensee of an employment agency (EA) was convicted at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts today (January 10) of overcharging a foreign domestic helper (FDH) and was fined \$6,000.

In May 2019, the Employment Agencies Administration (EAA) of the Labour Department (LD) received a complaint from an FDH against the Kai Sing Employment Agency, located in Tin Shui Wai, for charging her an excessive commission. As an investigation revealed sufficient evidence that the licensee of the EA concerned had overcharged the FDH, the LD decided to take

out prosecution against the licensee.

According to the law, a licensee or an associate of a licensee in respect of an EA, or a person purporting to act as such a licensee or associate, is not allowed to collect from a job seeker any fees or charges other than the prescribed commission, which is an amount not exceeding 10 per cent of the first month's salary of the job seeker upon successful placement.

The LD reminds EAs to operate in full compliance with the law and the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies at all times. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution and/or revocation of licence. The Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 2018, effective since February 9, 2018, has raised the maximum penalty for overcharging job seekers to a fine of \$350,000 and imprisonment for three years.

For enquiries or complaints about unlicensed operations or overcharging by EAs, please call the EAA of the LD at 2115 3667, or visit its office at Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon.

Managers of unlicensed guesthouses fined

Two women were each fined \$8,000 at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts today (January 10) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The courts heard that in April and July last year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected two suspected unlicensed guesthouses in Sai Pin Wai and on Castle Peak Road in Yuen Long. During the inspections, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented rooms in these guesthouses on a daily basis.

According to the OLA's records, these guesthouses did not possess licences under the Ordinance on the days of inspection. The women responsible for managing the premises were charged with contravening section 5(1) of the Ordinance.

A department spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and can lead to a criminal record. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA through the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaenq@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805) using the report

form downloaded from the OLA website (www.hadla.gov.hk), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (January 10) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches that are open all year round for swimming.

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Deep Water Bay Beach

Golden Beach

Silverstrand Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a storm or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the department's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Progress in the handling of banking complaints by HKMA

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (January 10) the progress made in its handling of banking complaints received as at end-December 2019. Banking complaints include cases concerning general banking services and conduct-related issues.

In December 2019, 156 cases were received and the handling of 189 cases was completed. As at end-December, the handling of 390 cases was in progress.

A table summarising the progress made in the handling of banking complaints by the HKMA is attached.