

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 18) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From November 10 to 16, two community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A female patient, aged 68 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Seasons Palace, 157 Kam Sheung Road, Yuen Long;
2. A female patient, aged 51 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Hang Ha Po Tsuen, Lam Tsuen, Tai Po.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of November 16 this year, 98 LD cases have been reported. In 2018 and 2017, there were 105 and 72 cases respectively.

"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.

Red flags hoisted at Big Wave Bay Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (November 18) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island, and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Public Hospital Service Arrangements

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) spokesperson said today (November 18) that due to traffic disruptions in various districts, some hospital and clinic services, including elective surgeries may be affected as staff cannot report duties on time. Services at the Accident and Emergency Departments and inpatient services at public hospitals are largely normal at the moment.

Patients who are not able to attend their scheduled consultation can call the clinics to reschedule the appointments later. There is no need to worry and rush for the consultation appointments. If patients do not have medication on hand, please call the clinics concerned.

HA Major Incident Control Centre will closely monitor the situation to help co-ordinate service arrangement as appropriate.

Closure of some LCSD facilities in Yau Tsim Mong District

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) announced today (November 18) that due to special circumstances which happened nearby, all facilities in Kowloon Park (including Yau Tsim Mong District Leisure Services

Offices, Kowloon Park Sports Centre and Kowloon Park Swimming Pool), Kwun Chung Sports Centre, King's Park Hockey Ground, tennis courts of King's Park Playground, the Hong Kong Museum of History, the Hong Kong Science Museum, the Hong Kong Space Museum, Tsim Sha Tsui Public Library, Yau Ma Tei Public Library, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and Yau Ma Tei Theatre in Yau Tsim Mong District are closed to ensure the safety of venue users and staff members. The department will closely monitor the situation and announce venue arrangements in a timely manner.

Subject to the situation, more cultural and leisure facilities in the same district and any other districts which may be affected will also be closed early and at short notice to ensure the safety of venue users. Members of the public who plan to go to those venues are advised to contact the venues concerned or 1823 in advance.

Labour Department urges employers to show understanding and flexibility in work arrangements of employees due to traffic conditions

The Labour Department (LD) today (November 18) urged employers to make flexible work arrangements for staff to return to work having regard to traffic and road conditions occurring during the day. This will help maintain good labour-management relations and ensure the safety of employees and the smooth operations of establishments.

"For staff who cannot report for duty on time on account of conditions in road traffic or public transport services, employers should give due consideration to the circumstances of individual employees and handle each case flexibly," an LD spokesman said.