

CHP investigates cluster of Legionnaires' disease in community

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 4) investigating a cluster of Legionnaires' disease (LD) cases, involving three patients, and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems and that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

The CHP announced two community-acquired LD cases on November 26, involving a 61-year-old male patient and a 76-year-old female patient. The CHP's subsequent genetic analysis of the *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 culture isolate from the respiratory specimens of the two patients revealed an identical sequence-based type.

Subsequently, one additional community-acquired LD case was recorded by the CHP. The male patient, aged 69 with underlying illnesses, lives in Tower 3A, The Wings IIIA, 19 Tong Yin Street, Tseung Kwan O. Genetic analysis of the infecting bacterial strain is in progress.

"Epidemiological investigations revealed that the three patients had no travel history in the incubation period (IP). However, they all either resided in or visited The Wings IIIA in the IP. Investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"The CHP has already collected relevant water samples from potential sources, namely a water fountain at the main entrance and a waterfall between Towers 2 and 3, in The Wings IIIA for testing. As a precautionary measure, the management office of The Wings IIIA suspended the operation of the water fountain and the waterfall," the spokesman added.

"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 get 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 the 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.

S for IT and Vice Minister of Science and Technology co-chair 13th meeting of Mainland/Hong Kong Science and Technology Co-operation Committee

The Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, and Vice Minister of Science and Technology Mr Zhang Jianguo co-chaired the 13th meeting of the Mainland/Hong Kong Science and Technology Co-operation Committee held in Guangzhou today (December 4).

At the meeting, Mr Yang said that it was a year of breakthroughs on the innovation and technology (I&T) co-operation between the Mainland and Hong Kong. These include the new policy announced in May which allowed universities and research institutions in Hong Kong to directly apply for science and technology funding of the Central Government and use the funding in Hong Kong; the signing of the Arrangement on Enhancing Innovation and Technology Cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong (the Arrangement) between the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the Innovation and Technology Bureau in September; and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government in November, under which the CAS will arrange for its research institutions to establish their presence in the two research clusters to be set up in Hong Kong. All these marked new milestones and signified the start of a new chapter in scientific research collaboration between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

Looking ahead, he said he considered that the opening of three key technology areas under the National Key Research and Development Programme for application by 10 local universities, as well as the launch of the Mainland-Hong Kong Joint Funding Scheme early next year, would be a great encouragement for universities and research institutions in Hong Kong. "The HKSAR Government looks forward to broadening and enriching the areas of innovation and technology co-operation between both places, and taking co-operation to the next level, under the framework of the Arrangement," Mr Yang said.

Mainland members attending the meeting included representatives from the MOST, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, the CAS, the National Natural Science Foundation of China, the China Association for Science and Technology, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Science and Technology, and the Science and Technology Innovation Commission of Shenzhen Municipality.

The Hong Kong delegation comprises representatives from the Innovation and Technology Bureau, the Innovation and Technology Commission, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, the Research Grants Council, the City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Baptist University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited, the Hong Kong Productivity Council, the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute, the Hong Kong Automotive Parts and Accessory Systems R&D Centre, the Logistics and Supply Chain MultiTech R&D Centre, the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel, and Nano and Advanced Materials Institute Limited.

CHP investigates influenza A outbreak at primary school in Southern District

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 4) investigating an influenza A outbreak at a primary school in Southern District, and again reminded the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene against influenza.

The outbreak involves nine boys and nine girls aged 5 to 8, as well as three female staff members, who developed cough, sore throat and fever since November 22. All of them sought medical attention. Among them, one student required hospitalisation and was discharged following treatment. All patients are now in a stable condition.

The respiratory specimens of eight students and three staff members tested positive for influenza A virus.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit and advised the school to adopt necessary infection control measures against respiratory infections. The school has been put under medical surveillance.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "To prevent outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory infections, it is of prime importance that children with fever, regardless of the presence of respiratory symptoms, should not be allowed to attend school. They should seek medical advice and avoid school till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Schools should also measure and record students' body temperature properly."

Schools are reminded to follow the [Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases](#) on preventive and control measures as well as management of outbreaks, which should be reported to the CHP for prompt follow-up.

"Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive Seasonal Influenza Vaccine(SIV) for personal protection," the spokesman said.

As it is already December and Hong Kong will soon enter the winter influenza season, eligible persons are urged to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies. Vaccination among family members is key to protecting their personal and family's health."

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccine for personal protection, the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses. For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).

Fourth meeting of Chief Executive's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development held

The Chief Executive's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development held its fourth meeting today (December 4) to deliberate on talent and manpower development in Hong Kong.

At the meeting, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, gave a presentation on talent and manpower development in Hong Kong. Members noted the work of the Human Resources Planning Commission which was established in April 2018 under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. They were also briefed on the manpower challenges faced by Hong Kong including an ageing population, a low fertility rate, a dwindling workforce and a fast-changing and competitive global economic environment. Members provided constructive advice on the various talent admission schemes in Hong Kong and how education and training could be enhanced to improve the quality and quantity of talent in Hong Kong.

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, said, "Talent is the most important driver for Hong Kong's continued development, and education and training are the key to nurturing talent. In addition to enhancing the quality of local talent, various schemes are in place to attract talent outside Hong Kong and we will continue to review their effectiveness and seek ways to improve them as and when necessary."

The Chief Executive also hosted a lunch today before the Council meeting

for her advisers as well as chairmen and vice-chairmen of relevant advisory and statutory bodies to facilitate exchange of views on the future development of Hong Kong.

The Council is a high-level body to advise the Chief Executive on Hong Kong's future development and strategies for driving innovation. It gives advice on Hong Kong's strategic positioning in the global and regional contexts and directions of economic development with an aim of enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness and growth potential, provides guidance on evidence-based research and studies on related issues with a view to enhancing policy formulation to meet changing development needs, and advises on stakeholder engagement and public participation in the policy formulation and consensus building process.

A gloomy and warm November

As the northeast monsoon affecting the south China coast was relatively weak, southerlies dominated in the lower atmosphere and water vapour built up, causing Hong Kong's weather in November 2018 to be cloudier and gloomier than usual. The mean amount of cloud in the month was 79 per cent, 25 per cent above the normal figure of 54 per cent – the highest on record for November. The duration of bright sunshine in the month was only 123.9 hours, about 31 per cent lower than the normal figure of 180.1 hours and the eighth lowest on record for November. Despite the gloomy weather, the month was warmer than usual. The mean temperature of 22.9 degrees and mean minimum temperature of 21.4 degrees were 1.1 degrees and 1.6 degrees above the respective normal figures, and were the ninth and fourth highest on record for November. The month was also wetter than usual with 73.4 millimetres of rainfall, about 95 per cent above the normal figure of 37.6 millimetres. The accumulated rainfall up to November this year was 2151.0 millimetres, a deficit of about 9 per cent compared to the normal figure of 2371.7 millimetres for the same period.

Tropical cyclone Yutu edged north slowly towards the coast of eastern Guangdong and weakened gradually on November 1 and 2. It eventually dissipated over the northeastern part of the South China Sea in the morning of November 3. Under the combined effect of the northeast monsoon and tropical cyclone Yutu, it was windy and dry with sunny periods in Hong Kong on the first day of November. While local winds subsided gradually, it was mainly cloudy with a few rain patches over the next two days.

Affected by the northeast monsoon, the weather turned windy with a few light rain patches in Hong Kong on November 4. As the cloud band covering the coast of Guangdong dissipated gradually, the weather in Hong Kong became generally fine over the next three days. With a replenishment of the northeast monsoon arriving at the coastal areas of Guangdong in the morning

of November 8, there were sunny periods with one or two light rain patches in Hong Kong. The weather turned cloudier and windier with light rain on November 9 and 10 as winds from the east strengthened. With the easterly airstream moderating gradually, there were sunny periods during the day on November 11 and 12. The temperature at the Hong Kong Observatory rose to a maximum of 28.0 degrees in the afternoon of November 12, the highest of the month. Under the influence of the northeast monsoon, winds strengthened on November 13, though the weather remained generally fine apart from a few light rain patches in the morning and at night.

Under the influence of a fresh to strong easterly airstream, the weather in Hong Kong became mainly cloudy again with a few light rain patches from November 14 to 17. The weather improved with sunny periods during the day on November 18. With a replenishment of the northeast monsoon reaching the south China coastal areas, it was slightly cooler with sunny intervals on November 19 and 20.

There were sunny periods during the day in Hong Kong on November 21. As a cold front moved across the coastal areas of Guangdong and winds from the north strengthened, the weather turned cloudy with a few rain patches at night. Affected by the northeast monsoon behind the cold front, the weather became appreciably cooler and drier, with sunny periods from November 22 to 24. With a broad rain-bearing cloud band covering southern China, local weather became cloudy and rainy from November 25 to 28. More than 20 millimetres of rainfall were recorded on November 25. Under the rain, the temperature at the Hong Kong Observatory dropped to a minimum of 17.0 degrees in the morning of November 26, the lowest of the month. With the cloud band thinning out gradually, sunshine returned on the last two days of the month.

Four tropical cyclones occurred over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in November 2018.

Details of issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in November are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal for November are tabulated in Table 2.