

Recall of Chinese herbal medicine exceeding limits for arsenic (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (October 18) endorsed a licensed Chinese herbal medicine (Chm) wholesaler, Wong Chak Kee Limited, to voluntarily recall from the market a batch of Chm, Herba Pteridis Multifidae (batch number: 180408), as the Chm exceeded the limits for arsenic set out by the Chinese Medicines Board of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMCHK). As a precautionary measure, Wong Chak Kee Limited is also voluntarily recalling other batches of Herba Pteridis Multifidae distributed by the company from the market.

During the DH's market surveillance, a sample of the above Chm was collected for analysis. The test result from the Government Laboratory revealed that the decoction prepared from the above Chm contained, in terms of the maximum daily intake of the above Chm, about 2.6 times the maximum limit of arsenic set out by CMCHK.

"Arsenic is a heavy metal. Long-term consumption of high levels of arsenic may cause adverse health effects. Major organs affected include the skin, the bladder and the lungs. So far, no adverse report related to the use of the above Chm has been received. Investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the DH said.

According to the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap 549), Herba Pteridis Multifidae is any or the whole part of *Pteris multifida* Poir. It is a Schedule 2 Chm of the Ordinance used to clear heat and dampness, disperse swelling and detoxify, as well as cool the blood, and is haemostatic.

Wong Chak Kee Limited has set up a hotline (2857 3332) for related enquiries. The DH will closely monitor the recall.

According to section 52 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), selling any drug not of the nature, substance or quality demanded by the purchaser is liable to a maximum penalty of \$10,000 and three months' imprisonment. Upon completion of investigation, the DH will work with the Department of Justice on prosecution matters and will also refer the case to the CMCHK for possible disciplinary action.

The DH urged members of the public who have purchased the above Chm to stop using it immediately and submit it to the Chinese Medicine Division of the DH on 16/F, AIA Kowloon Tower, Landmark East, 100 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, during office hours for disposal. Members of the public who have taken the above Chm and feel unwell should seek advice from healthcare professionals.



CSD issues statement in response to media enquiries about rehabilitated person

In response to recent media enquiries about a rehabilitated person concerning a work assignment, communication, complaints mechanism and the handling of illicit activities inside a penal institution, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) issued the following statement today (October 18) :

According to the law, no work will be carried out by persons in custody (PICs), beyond what is strictly necessary, on Sundays and important festivals. Under the existing practice, meals provided by institutions are prepared by PICs assigned to work in the kitchen under the supervision of correctional staff and catering instructors. Kitchens of institutions have to be operated all year round in order to provide meals for PICs every day. PICs who work in the kitchen will have their weekly rest day by rotation.

Regarding communications, PICs may send and receive letters according to the provisions stipulated in law, including to/from members of the Legislative Council, the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, other law enforcement agencies, etc, and proper records will be maintained to this effect. PICs may also request to have an interview with legislators or other law enforcement agencies through social visits, legal visits or visiting Justices of the Peace (JPs). There are quite a lot of examples in the past where interviews were conducted with PICs after the relevant parties were notified of the request of PICs.

For complaints raised by PICs which are of a minor nature and related to

daily operational matters of institutions, the Complaints Investigation Unit (CIU) of the CSD will refer them to the institutional management concerned for enquiry according to the existing mechanism, in order that the matter could be handled immediately. The institutional management will explain the circumstances to the PIC in detail and inform him/her of the result of the follow-up action taken. The CIU will inform the complainant regarding the relevant arrangement in writing and administer close monitoring on the progress of the case. If the case cannot be resolved by the institutional management or the complainant is not satisfied with the arrangement or the findings of the case, the CIU will carry out an investigation accordingly.

The CIU will conduct an investigation into each complaint in a fair, impartial and thorough manner. Upon conclusion of the investigation of the complaint, the CIU will submit the findings to the Correctional Services Department Complaints Committee for examination and endorsement. If the complainant is not satisfied with the findings of the investigation, he/she can lodge an appeal to the Correctional Services Department Complaints Appeal Board (CSDCAB). At present, the CSDCAB comprises 18 JPs and religious persons who are familiar with correctional operations, so as to ensure that the appeal cases are handled in an impartial manner.

In order to facilitate the rehabilitation of PICs in a safe and orderly custodial environment, the CSD will not tolerate any form of illicit activities such as gambling, unauthorised handling of dietary ingredients, etc. Practical measures, including large scale search operations, are taken to curb all kinds of illicit activities.

The CSD attaches great importance to the conduct, integrity and discipline of its staff. Guidelines in relation to personal conduct, ethics and discipline are promulgated from time to time for staff observance. Any staff members found to have breached the law will be dealt with seriously by the CSD.

The CSD suggests PICs or discharged persons who feel aggrieved by any treatment they received during imprisonment should lodge a complaint or air their grievances through various channels such as the CIU, the Ombudsman or other law enforcement agencies.

Third-term Commission on Poverty convenes second meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the second meeting of the third-term Commission on Poverty (CoP) this afternoon (October 18).

At the meeting, Mr Cheung and relevant government officials briefed

members on the various initiatives on improving people's livelihood announced in the 2018 Policy Address. These initiatives include further relaxing the age limit of the target beneficiaries of the Community Care Fund (CCF) Elderly Dental Assistance Programme; enhancing the means test of the Samaritan Fund and CCF assistance programmes; increasing education resources to secondary and primary schools as well as kindergartens; enhancing further labour protection for non-skilled workers engaged by government service contractors; strengthening support for the disadvantaged including ethnic minorities, children with special educational needs and persons with disability; and continuing to promote the Working Family Allowance Scheme. Members noted the Government's determination and commitment to improving people's livelihood and provided views on the new initiatives.

Mr Cheung stressed that the current-term Government attaches great importance to tackling social poverty and will continue to step up its efforts in alleviating poverty and helping the disadvantaged with a view to building a caring, harmonious and inclusive society.

The CoP also noted the implementation progress of various assistance programmes and the financial position of the CCF. In addition, the CoP agreed to extend the Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled Programme for a maximum of 24 months to provide eligible persons with severe disabilities a subsidy to purchase care goods and services or for other purposes related to nursing care. The revised total provision for the Programme is \$452.79 million and more than 2 700 persons are expected to benefit from the Programme.

During the meeting, the Social Welfare Department briefed members on the progress of implementing after-school learning and support programmes for grass-roots children under the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged (the Fund) as well as the review on the service impacts of dedicated portions under the Fund. Members recognised that the Fund could effectively promote tripartite partnership among the welfare sector, the business community and the Government to help the disadvantaged. Members also expressed views on the assistance programmes and way forward of the Fund.

In addition, as a follow-up to the discussion of the last meeting, the Office of the Government Economist and the Census and Statistics Department briefed members on the enhancement proposals of the poverty line analytical framework. Members gave views on the proposals.

[Introduction of new smart Hong Kong identity card and territory-wide](#)

identity card replacement exercise

The Immigration Department (ImmD) will start to issue new smart Hong Kong identity cards (HKICs) next month.

"Starting from Monday, November 26, 2018, if a person applies for an HKIC at any one of the Registration of Persons (ROP) Offices, he or she will receive a new form of smart HKIC," an ImmD spokesman said today (October 18).

This covers HKIC applications from persons who need to apply for a juvenile identity card upon reaching the age of 11; persons who have to apply for an adult identity card upon reaching the age of 18; new arrivals; persons whose identity cards have been lost, destroyed, damaged or defaced; and persons who wish to amend the particulars printed on their HKICs.

The spokesman further announced that the upcoming territory-wide identity card replacement exercise will start on Thursday, December 27, 2018. Holders of existing smart HKICs will be invited to attend one of the nine newly established Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres (SIDCCs) in phases, in accordance with their year of birth, to have their HKICs replaced within specified periods. No fee will be charged for new smart HKICs issued under the replacement exercise.

"The nine SIDCCs are all situated in convenient locations (Annex) and are easily accessible by public transport. They will be open from Mondays to Saturdays (except Sundays and public holidays), from 8am to 10pm," the spokesman added.

It is estimated that the replacement exercise will last about four years. The Secretary for Security will issue an Order to announce the details of the first cycle. Subject to the normal negative vetting procedure of the Legislative Council, the arrangement will be as follows:

Eligible Persons	Period
Members of the Immigration Service, police officers and labour inspectors	December 27, 2018 – March 30, 2019
Holders of existing HKICs who were born in 1985 or 1986	January 21, 2019 – March 30, 2019
Holders of existing HKICs who were born in 1968 or 1969	April 1, 2019 – June 1, 2019

The spokesman explained that, as with the last replacement exercise, the first cycle would begin by first replacing the smart HKICs of members of the Immigration Service, police officers and labour inspectors, allowing them to get familiar with the features of new smart HKICs for fighting against

illegal immigration and illegal employment. Also, the Order has provided the Chief Executive, members of the Executive Council and the Legislative Council, and Principal Officials with an option to apply for the new smart HKICs at the same stage to further promote the new smart HKICs.

In view of the demographic changes of Hong Kong, and to make the arrangement more convenient to the public, in particular groups in need, the following new facilitation measures will be introduced in the replacement exercise:

(a) The HKIC holders who are invited under their age groups may bring along two family members or friends aged 65 or above (born in 1954 or before) to replace their smart HKICs together during the same visit, so that these elderly persons need not proceed to the SIDCCs separately by themselves when their respective age groups are called up for HKIC replacement at a later stage; and

(b) For the first time an on-site identity card replacement service will be introduced at specified residential care homes for elderly persons and persons with disabilities (RCHs). In addition to replacing their HKICs at the SIDCCs in the period specified for their age groups, residents of the relevant RCHs may choose to have their HKICs replaced on-site at the RCHs. Starting from the second quarter of 2019, ImmD will roll out the on-site identity card replacement service by visiting the RCHs concerned throughout the territory in phases.

ImmD will also make better use of technology to enhance convenience and efficiency. With effect from October 29, members of the public may make appointments and prefill forms on the Internet before visiting the ROP Offices or the SIDCCs, so that they may save queuing time and enjoy a faster registration process. In addition, ImmD's Mobile Application will provide relevant services from November 26. Furthermore, self-service registration kiosks and self-service collection kiosks will be introduced to provide more convenient services to the public.

Publicity will be conducted through various channels to explain to members of the public the details of the new smart HKICs and the replacement exercise prior to its launch and throughout the exercise.

Hong Kong residents who are presently overseas need not rush back to Hong Kong solely for replacement of their HKICs. They can do so within 30 days after their return to Hong Kong if they have missed their turn. Meanwhile, the existing arrangement for issuing the Certificate of Exemption to the aged, the blind or the infirm who are in Hong Kong but are unable to replace their identity cards in person remains unchanged.

For enquiries, please contact ImmD by calling the enquiry hotline at 2824 6111, by fax to 2877 7711 or by email to enquiry@imm.gov.hk.

CHP investigates influenza A outbreak at kindergarten in Kwai Tsing

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 18) investigating an influenza A outbreak at a kindergarten in Kwai Tsing.

The outbreak involves 10 boys and 10 girls aged 3 to 6, who have developed fever, cough, sore throat and runny nose since October 12. Nineteen of them sought medical attention. Five patients required hospitalisation and three of them were discharged after treatment. All patients are in a stable condition.

The nasopharyngeal swab of three students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit to the school and advised the school to adopt 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.

The Vaccination Subsidy Scheme 2018/19 was launched on October 10. The spokesman for the CHP urged eligible persons to receive subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) in a timely manner to better protect themselves in the coming winter influenza season.

"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 SIV for personal protection," the spokesman said.

"Based on past epidemiological patterns, the winter influenza season usually occurs from January to March/April each year. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, we urge eligible persons to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Vaccination among family members

is key to protecting their personal and family's health."

The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses:

- Receive SIV for personal protection;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Wash or clean hands frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, or after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs;
- Cover the nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin;
- Put on a surgical mask when respiratory symptoms develop;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks when staying in such places; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).