

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (October 14) 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 October 6 to 12, the CHP recorded one community-acquired LD case, involving a male patient, aged 57 with underlying illnesses, who lives in North District.

"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 October 12, 90 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 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; 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 that 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; 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.

â€‹ 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.

â€‹â€‹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.

[Update on postal services to United States](#)

Hongkong Post announced today (October 14) that, as advised by the postal administration of the United States, due to the impact of hurricane, mail delivery services to areas with postcodes 006–009, 214–268, 300–352,

354–399, 700, 701, 703–708, 710–714, 716–729 and 801–851 are subject to delay.

Analytical Accounts of Exchange Fund

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) released today (October 14) the key analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund at the end of September 2024.

Foreign assets, representing the external assets of the Exchange Fund, decreased during the month by HK\$21.4 billion to HK\$3,485.9 billion.

The Monetary Base, comprising Certificates of Indebtedness, Government-issued currency notes and coins in circulation, the balance of the banking system and Exchange Fund Bills and Notes issued, amounted to HK\$1,941.4 billion.

Claims on the private sector in Hong Kong amounted to HK\$293.4 billion.

Foreign liabilities amounted to HK\$26.6 billion.

The analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund are released in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and are referred to as the Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank under SDDS (Annex).

Release calendar

The release calendar of the Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund for 2025 is announced below:

Reference Month	Release Date
January 2025	February 14, 2025
February 2025	March 14, 2025
March 2025	April 14, 2025
April 2025	May 14, 2025
May 2025	June 13, 2025
June 2025	July 14, 2025
July 2025	August 14, 2025
August 2025	September 12, 2025
September 2025	October 14, 2025
October 2025	November 14, 2025

November 2025
December 2025

December 12, 2025
January 14, 2026

At present, four press releases relating to the Exchange Fund's data are issued by the HKMA each month. Three of these releases are issued to disseminate monetary data in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's SDDS. The fourth press release, on the Exchange Fund's Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account, is made in accordance with the HKMA's policy of maintaining a high level of transparency. For the month of October 2024, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

October 7 (Issued)	SDDS International Reserves (Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency Reserve Assets Figures)
October 14	SDDS Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank (Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund)
October 31	SDDS Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity
October 31	Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account

Government appoints Chairman of Securities and Futures Commission

The Government announced today (October 14) that the Chief Executive has, pursuant to the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Cap. 571), appointed Dr Kelvin Wong Tin-yau as the Chairman of the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) for a term of three years from October 20, 2024, to October 19, 2027.

Dr Wong was a Non-Executive Director (NED) of the SFC from 2012 to 2018 and a member of the Listing Committee of the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited from 2007 to 2013. He is currently the Chairman of the Accounting and Financial Reporting Council (AFRC).

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, said, "Dr Wong has been dedicated to serving the financial services industry of Hong Kong, with extensive experience in the operation of the securities and futures markets, capital market development, corporate governance and financial regulatory matters. Under his stewardship, the AFRC smoothly implemented the accounting and audit regulatory reforms, bringing Hong Kong's regulatory regime in line with international developments. I expect that under Dr Wong's leadership, the SFC

will continue to uphold its dual role as a regulator and facilitator of market development to ensure the fair, transparent and orderly operation of the local securities and futures markets, and to strive for reforms and innovations, with a view to solidifying and enhancing Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre."

Dr Wong will continue to serve as the Chairman of the AFRC up to December 31, 2024.

With the incumbent SFC Chairman, Mr Tim Lui Tim-leung, completing his tenure, Mr Chan said, "Under Mr Lui's leadership, the SFC actively supports the Government's policies, seamlessly collaborates with other financial regulators in Hong Kong, and closely monitors the financial market to ensure an orderly and smooth operation. The SFC continues to promote innovations such as implementing a number of market reform measures in co-ordination with the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, and with the staunch support of the central ministries, proactively furthers the development of the Connect Schemes with the Mainland. The SFC also persistently fosters the development of regulatory regimes, with examples including the implementation of the licensing regime for virtual asset trading platforms to facilitate the sustained responsible development of the sector. Moreover, the SFC actively participates in international regulatory co-operation and standard formulation. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Mr Lui for his well-recognised achievements over his six-year leadership of the SFC."

[Consultation conclusions on proposed renaming of Virtual Bank](#)

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

â€‹The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) published today (October 14) the conclusions on the public consultation on the proposal to rename "Virtual Bank" (Conclusions Paper). The Conclusions Paper sets out the key comments received in the consultation, the HKMA's responses to these comments, and the HKMA's conclusions on the proposed renaming.

The HKMA received a total of 26 submissions from various parties including industry/professional associations, virtual banks and members of the public in the consultation. The respondents were broadly supportive of the proposal, and the majority of them agreed with the proposed new name "Digital Bank". The HKMA will embark on the amendments to the Guideline on Authorization of Virtual Banks to effect the new name "Digital Bank" shortly.

The [Conclusions Paper](#) is available on the HKMA website.