

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 23) 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 September 15 to 21, the CHP recorded two community-acquired LD cases:

1. A male patient, aged 68 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Wong Tai Sin District; and
2. A male patient, aged 76 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Yau Tsim Mong 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 September 21, 83 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.

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.

REO's Electoral Information Centre Open Days to celebrate National Day open for public appointments

To celebrate with members of the public the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Electoral Information Centre (EIC) of the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) (address: 7/F, Treasury Building, 3 Tonkin Street West, Cheung Sha Wan, Kowloon) will hold National Day Open Days from September 30 to October 2 (Monday to Wednesday).

The Open Days will offer a wide range of programmes, including a talk on electoral information, a mock polling session and National Day-related interactive games. Visitors can not only take photos with the National Day decorations and the festively dressed Ballot Box Family mascots at the venue, but they can also receive souvenirs of the Ballot Box Family in the National Day special edition.

The REO has earlier issued invitations to primary and secondary schools as well as non-governmental organisations and institutions, and the relevant group appointment quota is full. For individual appointments, members of the public who are interested in visiting may call the REO's hotline at 2891 1001 during office hours from 8.45am to 6pm to make an appointment from today (September 23) until September 27. Throughout the period of the Open Days (from September 30 to October 2), there will be a total of 10 sessions open for individual visits, including three on the afternoon of September 30, five on the afternoon of October 1 and two on the afternoon of October 2. Each visit session will last for 30 minutes.

All visits to the National Day Open Days are free, but quotas are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. For further information, please visit the REO's website (www.reo.gov.hk/en/service-desk/ecenter/openday.html) or call the hotline at 2891 1001.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, September 23, 2024 is 103.3 (up 0.2 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, September 21, 2024 was 103.1 (same as last Friday's index).

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on September 20 to noon today (September 23), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 470 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category, in the past three days (including last Saturday and Sunday). No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 150 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 86 182 samples of food imported from

Japan (including 55 130 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 19 706 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Registration and nomination invited for Labour Advisory Board Election of Employee Representatives

The Labour Department (LD) is inviting employee unions registered under the Trade Unions Ordinance (TUO) to register as electors, appoint authorised representatives to vote and nominate candidates for the 2025-2026 Labour Advisory Board (LAB) Election of Employee Representatives.

"Registration as electors, appointment of authorised representatives and nomination of candidates start today (September 23) and will close on October 15, 2024 (Tuesday)," a spokesman for the LD said.

The LAB is a tripartite consultative body comprising representatives of employees and employers to advise the Commissioner for Labour on labour matters. The current term of the LAB will end on December 31 this year. An election of five employee representatives to the LAB for its next two-year tenure, ending December 31, 2026, will be held at Mei Foo Community Hall, 1/F, Mei Foo Government Complex, on November 16 (Saturday) this year. Authorised representatives may cast their votes at the above polling station between 9am and 5pm.

Employee unions registered as electors in the LAB elections held in 2006 or thereafter are only required to submit forms to appoint authorised representatives in order to vote in the election.

"We have sent out today related forms and copies of the rules and procedures for the election to all employee unions registered under the TUO," the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the LD has invited five employer associations to each nominate one representative to sit for the next tenure of the LAB as employer representatives. These associations are the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong, the Employers' Federation of Hong Kong, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries and the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce.

Enquiries on matters relating to the above election can be made at 2852 4024.