

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (July 15) 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 July 7 to 13, the CHP recorded one community-acquired LD case, involving a male patient, aged 71 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Kwun Tong 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 July 13, 53 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.

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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.

[Commissioner of Customs and Excise hosts luncheon for Consul-General of](#)

India to Hong Kong (with photos)

The Commissioner of Customs and Excise, Ms Louise Ho, had a luncheon with the Consul-General of India to Hong Kong, Ms Satwant Khanalia, and the consulate staff at the Customs Headquarters Building today (July 15).

In her welcoming remarks, Ms Ho said Hong Kong Customs has formally taken on the role of Vice-Chairperson for the Asia/Pacific (A/P) region of the World Customs Organization starting this month for a period of two years. She thanked the Indian Customs for its support and trust and stressed that Hong Kong Customs will strive to safeguard multilateralism, promote international co-operation, enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement in the region, and foster the sustainable prosperity of the A/P region.

Furthermore, Ms Ho said she was pleased to witness the close collaboration between the Consulate General of India in Hong Kong and the Indian Customs with Hong Kong Customs. Through intelligence exchange, Hong Kong Customs has recently detected two cross-boundary money laundering cases, which involved about \$14.5 billion in total and used trade activities to cover the criminal proceeds, fully demonstrating the determination of both parties in combating cross-boundary crimes. She expressed her hope that the two Customs authorities would continue to strengthening co-operation to promote regional development agendas.

Ms Ho added that a regional forum on combating transnational organised crimes will be held in December this year, and the ways to more effectively crack down on cross-boundary money laundering activities will be one of the important topics. While enforcement representatives of the A/P region, Consuls-general and foreign Customs attachés, as well as private stakeholders, will be invited to attend, Ms Ho took the opportunity to appeal to the Consulate General of India in Hong Kong and the Indian Customs to also take part in the event.



Hong Kong students win medals at International Biology Olympiad (with photo)

A team of four students representing Hong Kong achieved excellent results at the 35th International Biology Olympiad (IBO), winning two gold medals and two bronze medals.

The IBO is an international competition for secondary students with emphasis on both theory and practice. Students are required to apply analytical skills and conduct experiments to tackle challenging problems in biology. The 35th IBO was held from July 7 to 14 in Astana, Kazakhstan, with 290 contestants from 75 countries/regions participating in the competition.

Winning gold medals were Hui Sze-man from La Salle College and Zhang Yixuan from Hong Kong International School. Earning bronze were Sham Pui-yan from Harrow International School Hong Kong and Chan Yik-cheung from St. Joseph's College.

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, congratulated the Hong Kong team today (July 15) on their tremendous performance. "The excellent results achieved by the Hong Kong team in this international competition are testimony to Hong Kong students' analytical ability and creativity in tackling complex problems in biology. I believe that these challenging learning activities could broaden the horizons of students with special potential, and their talent could be further developed.

"The Education Bureau (EDB) is committed to promoting the setting up of school-based talent pools to identify and nurture gifted students in primary and secondary schools. The EDB has continued to strengthen collaboration with the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education (HKAGE), to conduct more training and competitions at the territory-wide, cross-territory, national and international levels, with an aim to offer more quality and challenging off-school learning activities, specific to areas related to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics), for those who are exceptionally gifted to develop their potential," Dr Choi said.

Members of the Hong Kong team also achieved excellent results in the IBO Hong Kong Contest last year. They subsequently completed the biology enhancement programme provided by the HKAGE. The outstanding students in the programme were then selected as contestants representing Hong Kong to participate in the 35th IBO. The Hong Kong team was fully funded by the EDB to join this competition.



Lands Department releases figures on registered lease modifications, land exchanges, private treaty grants and lot extensions in second quarter of 2024

The Lands Department (LandsD) announced today (July 15) that it registered 15 lease modifications, one land exchange and one lot extension in the Land Registry during the quarter ending June 2024, of which seven were modifications of a technical nature involving nil premium.

Among these 17 land transactions, five are located on Hong Kong Island, six are in Kowloon and six are in the New Territories. The transactions exclude Small House cases.

There were no private treaty grants registered during the quarter.

The above land transactions realised a total land premium of about \$2,297.332 million.

Transaction records of the lease modifications, land exchanges, private treaty grants and lot extensions, including those registered recently, are uploaded to the LandsD website (www.landsd.gov.hk/en/land-disposal-transaction/land-transaction.html) on a monthly basis. Details of the transactions may be obtained by searching the registered documents in the Land Registry.

Public urged to continue strengthening anti-mosquito efforts

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (July 15) announced that the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in June was 14 per cent, at Level 2, indicating that the distribution of *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in the areas surveyed was fairly extensive. Relevant government departments have stepped up mosquito prevention and control actions.

In June, among the 64 survey areas, the area gravidtrap index in eight areas exceeded the alert level of 20 per cent. The gravidtraps were mostly located in the vicinity of private residential areas, public housing estates, schools, recreational and sports facilities and public places. The FEHD has collaborated with relevant government departments by taking immediate action to strengthen mosquito prevention and control work in the area concerned.

Moreover, the monthly density index for *Aedes albopictus* in June was 1.4, which represented that an average of 1.4 *Aedes albopictus* adults were found in the *Aedes*-positive gravidtraps, indicating that the number of adult *Aedes albopictus* was not abundant in the survey areas. The gravidtrap and density indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different survey areas as well as information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "There is a significant relationship between local mosquito infestation and seasonal changes. The gravidtrap indices in various survey areas would be relatively higher during hot and rainy spring and summer months (i.e. from May to September) as mosquitoes breed quickly. Members of the public are reminded to continue the routine mosquito prevention and control work, especially the repair and maintenance of structures. Cracks and dents which may accumulate water and become potential breeding grounds should be filled and levelled to reduce the chance of mosquito breeding.

"The Government is concerned about mosquito infestation. The increase in the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for June might be related to the continuously hot and rainy days in the month. In response to the two epidemiologically linked local cases of dengue fever (DF) recorded earlier at Tin Shui (1) Estate in Tin Shui Wai, the interdepartmental Pest Control Steering Committee convened a special meeting on July 5 to review the latest situation of mosquito infestation and the anti-mosquito work taken by departments, as well as discussing the implementation of further measures to prevent the spread of local DF cases. The FEHD has continued to intensify the mosquito prevention and control work with relevant government departments in areas under their purview, including eliminating mosquito breeding places,

applying larvicides, conducting fogging operations to eradicate adult mosquitoes, and placing mosquito trapping devices at suitable locations. The FEHD has also provided departments with professional advice and technical support to assist them in formulating and implementing effective anti-mosquito measures swiftly. At the same time, the FEHD has strengthened publicity and education. The FEHD will continue to monitor the mosquito infestation in all districts, and will conduct prompt and effective mosquito prevention and control work," the spokesman continued.

The Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan; the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Ecology (Food), Miss Vivian Lau; and the Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Environmental Hygiene), Mr Arsene Yiu, visited Tin Shui Estate in Tin Shui Wai and its vicinity on July 4 to inspect the targeted mosquito control work carried out by the FEHD and relevant departments for prevention of DF. In response to the two local cases mentioned above, the FEHD and relevant departments have immediately conducted surveys of mosquito infestation and have carried out additional targeted mosquito prevention and control work in areas within a 250-metre radius of the residences of the patients and places the patients had visited during the incubation and infectious period, as well as stepping up inspections and taking enforcement actions where necessary to stop the further spread of DF.

The FEHD will conduct a three-phase Anti-mosquito Campaign this year. The second phase of the territory-wide campaign was conducted from April 15 to June 16. During the period, the district offices of the FEHD targeted areas that had drawn particular concern, such as public markets, cooked food centres and hawker bazaars, single-block buildings, streets and back lanes, common parts of buildings, village houses, construction sites, vacant sites and road works sites, to remove accumulated water and carry out mosquito prevention and control work. After the second phase of the campaign, the FEHD has conducted territory-wide thematic special operations on mosquito prevention and control, such as strengthening mosquito control at individual construction sites, for three weeks starting from June 24. To further enhance the effectiveness of mosquito control, the FEHD and relevant government departments have carried out the second phase of the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations since May 2 to focus on eliminating potential mosquito breeding places, and called on property management officers to arrange necessary repairs to their premises to minimise mosquito breeding places. Furthermore, intense adult mosquito control has been conducted by means of regular ultra-low volume fogging operations after the onset of the rainy season.

The FEHD appeals to members of the public to work together to carry out mosquito prevention and control measures early, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing water in vases and scrubbing their inner surfaces, removing water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. The FEHD also advises members of the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent the accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and

surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

â€‹*Aedes albopictus* is a kind of mosquito that can transmit DF. DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. Based on the latest surveillance data from the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, there has been an increase in DF cases in some places in Asia thus far, compared with the corresponding period of last year. The Americas (including Brazil, Argentina and Peru) have recorded over 10 million cases, which is a record number, since the beginning of 2024. The dengue activity in neighbouring areas is high and Hong Kong has recorded 33 imported DF cases and three local DF cases so far this year. Members of the public should carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures proactively.