

Update on cluster of COVID-19 cases in Ruttonjee Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients infected with COVID-19 in a geriatric infirmary ward, the spokesperson for Ruttonjee Hospital made the following update today (July 8):

Nine more patients (one male and eight females aged between 38 and 83) in the ward concerned have presented with respiratory symptoms. Appropriate tests were arranged for the patients and their test results were positive for COVID-19. The patients are currently being treated in cohort isolation and all are in stable condition. In addition, an 85-year-old male patient, who was in critical condition, continued to deteriorate and passed away today.â€

Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the ward concerned are under close surveillance.

The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow up.

“iAM Smart” registration process simplified (with photos)

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) announced today (July 8) that new functions will be launched in the "iAM Smart" mobile app to simplify the registration process and enhance the user experience.

To further enable members of the public to register for and upgrade to the "iAM Smart+" account that provides a digital signing function, the OGCIO will launch the new version (3.5.0) of the "iAM Smart" mobile app on July 11. With mobile phones supporting the Near Field Communication (NFC) technology, members of the public can upgrade to this new version to read the card face data from the new smart identity (ID) card chip and easily register for or upgrade to "iAM Smart+" via the "iAM Smart" mobile app on their own, without the need to visit self-registration kiosks or service counters in person. The new registration process only requires a single shot of the ID card, instead of shooting the ID card from multiple angles.

Members of the public who have not registered for "iAM Smart" can directly register for an "iAM Smart+" account by downloading and using the

new version of the "iAM Smart" mobile app. To enable the existing "iAM Smart" users to upgrade to "iAM Smart+" by themselves, the OGCI0 will gradually issue a push notification inviting them to "Upgrade to iAM Smart+" through the new version of the "iAM Smart" mobile app (Photo 1). Existing "iAM Smart+" users need not register again. Members of the public can refer to the attached photo to know whether they are "iAM Smart" or "iAM Smart+" users (Photo 2).

It is very simple to register for or upgrade to "iAM Smart+" with the new version of the "iAM Smart" mobile app. The procedures include a single shot of the front of the new smart ID card and placing it near the NFC antenna of the mobile phone, followed by facial recognition to verify the identity. The mobile phone concerned must be using iOS 14.0/Android 12.0 or above. For details, please refer to the attachment. The information is also available on the "iAM Smart" thematic website (www.iamsmart.gov.hk/en/media-info.html?i=207#tabs-3). Meanwhile, members of the public can still register for or upgrade to "iAM Smart+" at more than 50 self-registration kiosks located across various districts, registration service counters of any post office or via the mobile registration services.

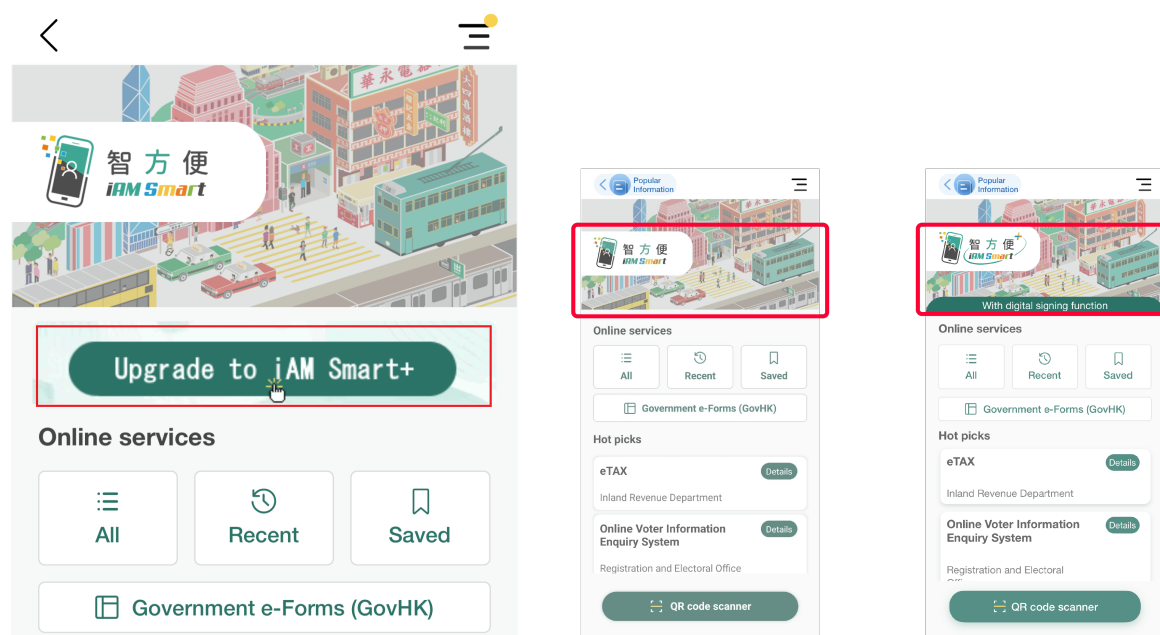
A spokesman of the OGCI0 stressed, "The existing legal requirements and system security design only allow the government-authorised 'iAM Smart' system to read only the card face data from the smart ID card chip through the 'iAM Smart' mobile app as initiated by the citizen. The user registration procedures have been significantly simplified, as multi-level data verification and secured encryption technologies are adopted throughout the process to ensure the identity of the registrant is verified in a secure, reliable and accurate manner. The entire process fully complies with relevant ordinances, as well as requirements for information security and protection of personal data privacy."

"The invitation for 'Upgrade to iAM Smart+' or push notifications will only be sent through the 'iAM Smart' system. The entire 'iAM Smart+' registration or upgrade process will only be conducted within the 'iAM Smart' mobile app. Members of the public should stay vigilant to suspicious phone calls, SMS, emails, etc, claiming to assist with registering for or upgrading to 'iAM Smart+'. They shall not provide personal information to scammers or click on suspicious links directly from SMS or emails," the OGCI0 spokesman added.

Since its launch in late 2020, the "iAM Smart" one-stop personalised digital services platform has already accumulated over 2.7 million registrations and provided over 380 government, public and private online services with an average of over 100 000 logins per day. The OGCI0 will introduce more new functions to further enhance the user experience and simplify the operation workflow, with the goal of fully adopting the "iAM Smart" platform to provide one-stop digital services and realising a "single portal for online government services" by 2025.

Members of the public can download and use the latest version of the "iAM Smart" mobile app for free from the "iAM Smart" thematic website at

www.iamsmart.gov.hk/en/download.html or Apple App Store, Google Play and Huawei AppGallery.



[EMSD announces latest sampling results for legionella at fresh water cooling towers](#)

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (July 8) announced that the department tested 58 water samples collected from cooling towers in 35 buildings in its routine inspections in June 2024. One sample was detected to have a total legionella count at or above the upper threshold, which is 1 000 colony-forming units per millilitre. The latest statistics are set out in Annex 1.

The cooling tower in which the one sample was collected is located at 39-47 Wang Lok Street, Yuen Long. The EMSD has issued nuisance notice under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance to the owner of the cooling tower requiring appropriate disinfection work to be done. Disinfection of the cooling tower in this case has already been completed by the owner. Details of the case can be found in Annex 2.

The EMSD publishes the latest statistics of the above information on a half-monthly basis on its website (www.emsd.gov.hk/en/other_regulatory_services/cooling_towers/water_sampling/index.html).

The EMSD reminds the owners of fresh water cooling towers that they have the responsibility to design, operate and maintain cooling towers properly.

They should arrange regular inspections, timely maintenance and periodic testing of the water quality in their cooling towers in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fresh Water Cooling Towers issued by the department to prevent the proliferation of legionella.

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (July 8) 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 June 30 to July 6, the CHP recorded one community-acquired LD case, involving a male patient, aged 57 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Islands 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 6, 52 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.

DH conducts enforcement operation against waterpipe smoking in no smoking areas (with photos)

The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) conducted an enforcement operation against illegal waterpipe smoking activities in no smoking areas in Wan Chai during the evening of July 6.

During the operation, officers from TACO (including plainclothes officers) issued a total of six fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to persons illegally smoking waterpipes at one bar. TACO officers also found that the bar was suspected of displaying smoking product advertisements and selling smoking products without displaying health warnings as required by law. TACO's investigation is ongoing and prosecution may be taken against operators of bars/restaurants suspected of violating the provisions of the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) (the Ordinance) regarding the advertising of smoking products, and aiding and abetting smoking offences under the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 221). TACO will also refer the case involving the sale of smoking products without displaying the required health warnings to the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department for follow-up.

Under the Ordinance, conducting a smoking act in a statutory no smoking area (such as indoor areas of bars or restaurants) is prohibited. Any person doing a smoking act in statutory no smoking areas are liable to a fixed penalty of \$1,500. Moreover, where smoking products (including waterpipes) are sold, in bars or otherwise, the restrictions on the promotion and sale of smoking products stipulated in the Ordinance apply. Offenders are liable on summary conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000. Venue managers of statutory no smoking areas are empowered by the Ordinance to request the smoking offender to cease the act; if the offender is not co-operative, he/she may contact the Police for assistance.

Also, under the Criminal Procedure Ordinance, any person who aids, abets, counsels or procures the commission by another person of any offence shall be guilty of the like offence. A spokesman for the DH appeals to operators and venue managers of bars/restaurants not to assist any person in breaching the statutory smoking prohibitions, or provide a waterpipe apparatus and tobacco for customers to use.

The DH spokesman stressed that TACO will follow up and investigate every complaint about illegal smoking, and will conduct inspections and take enforcement action in the venue concerned. TACO will also conduct joint inspections and enforcement actions (including plainclothes operations) with other law enforcement agencies from time to time with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement. The DH will continue to closely monitor and

take stringent enforcement actions to tackle illegal waterpipe smoking. In the past 12 months, TACO conducted 68 operations against illegal waterpipe smoking activities in no smoking areas. A total of 130 FPNs were issued against smoking offenders, while 74 summonses were issued to staff members and operators of the bars/restaurants for other related offences.

The spokesman said that a waterpipe is a smoking product, and its combustion of fuel (e.g. charcoal) releases high concentrations of carbon monoxide. Due to deeper inhalation and a longer smoking session, waterpipe users usually inhale more toxins than they would when smoking cigarettes. A typical one-hour waterpipe smoking session exposes the user to 100 to 200 times the volume of smoke inhaled from a single conventional cigarette. Moreover, sharing a waterpipe apparatus increases the risk of infectious disease transmission such as tuberculosis. Furthermore, the areas in bars/restaurants where waterpipes are handled or kept have been found to be unhygienic during previous enforcement operations. The spokesman cautions against waterpipe smoking or the use of other smoking products. Smokers should quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. For more information on the hazards of waterpipe smoking, please visit www.livetobaccofree.hk/pdfs/waterpipe_leaflet_new.pdf.

