

Queen Elizabeth Hospital update on a walk-away patient incident

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding a walk-away patient incident earlier, the spokesman for Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) today (December 21) made the following update:

A 63-year-old confirmed COVID-19 patient (case number: 7379) fled away from the QEH isolation ward on December 18. The hospital reported the case to the Police immediately. The patient was located by the Police and escorted back to the hospital isolation ward for treatment shortly at around 12am. The patient is now in stable condition.

The hospital wards have enhanced patient's management and surveillance. Security has been enhanced to the floors of isolation wards and extra patrols have been deployed.

The hospital appeals to all patients under isolation treatment to strictly follow the direction of medical staff. They should not leave the hospital without permission in order to protect the public and for their own health. The hospital will continue to cooperate with the police investigation.

Tolls of Lantau Link to be waived from 0.00am on December 27

â€‹The Transport Department (TD) today (December 21) reminded members of the public that the tolls of the Lantau Link will be waived from 0.00am on December 27 (Sunday).

The Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link Northern Connection will open to traffic in the morning on December 27 and the tolls of the Lantau Link will be waived from 0.00am on the same day. Motorists are reminded that works will be carried out in phases in the vicinity of the Lantau Toll Plaza starting from around 9pm on December 26, including closure of some of the traffic lanes for removing tolling facilities such as toll booths and modification of traffic signs and road markings. During this period, temporary traffic lanes will be set up in the vicinity of the Lantau Toll Plaza and the existing speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour will be maintained. Appropriate traffic signs and road markings will be set up on-site to guide motorists.

From 0.00am on December 27, motorists can drive through the Lantau Toll Plaza without stopping and paying tolls. Affected motorists are advised to pay attention to the on-site situation and drive with utmost care and patience. For the existing traffic arrangement and the traffic arrangement on the implementation day of the toll waiver at the Lantau Toll Plaza, please refer to Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

After the implementation of the toll waiver, road works will continue to be carried out in the vicinity of the Lantau Toll Plaza including removal of the canopy and road resurfacing. Temporary traffic measures will be adjusted in phases in accordance with the required works areas and adequate traffic lanes will be reserved for vehicles to drive through the vicinity of the toll plaza.

In addition, as vehicles going to and from Ma Wan are still subject to restriction via prohibited zone permit, the kiosks and gates at the Ma Wan Toll Plaza will be retained for permit checking purposes after implementation of the toll waiver. Motorists still need to stop at the gate of the Ma Wan Toll Plaza for checking of prohibited zone permits by the staff of the Tsing Ma Control Area operator when entering Ma Wan. For leaving Ma Wan, motorists can drive directly through the Ma Wan Toll Plaza.

For details on the toll waiver for the Lantau Link, please visit the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk) or use the "HKeMobility" mobile app.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

FPS payment function extended to

government counters and self-help kiosks

The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau today (December 21) announced that in order to assist members of the public in paying government fees and charges, four more government departments will accept payments through the Faster Payment System (FPS).

Starting today, FPS QR code devices will be available for use at designated counters and self-help kiosks of the Companies Registry, the Immigration Department, the Official Receiver's Office and the Transport Department, so that altogether seven government departments now accept payments through the FPS. Members of the public can simply scan the FPS QR codes generated by the devices using mobile banking applications or e-wallets of stored-value facility operators that support payments of the government fees and charges through FPS QR codes.

The FPS has been widely used by members of the public since its launch in September 2018. As of November this year, the FPS has recorded 6.54 million registrations and processed 160 million real-time transactions (involving a total of about \$1,900 billion and RMB34 billion). To promote wider adoption of the FPS and provide greater convenience to the public, the Government has since November last year accepted payment of taxes, rates and Government rent, and water charges through the FPS. The Government will continue to explore adopting the FPS to assist members of the public in making payments for other government fees and charges.

CHP reminds public on precautions against cold weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (December 21) reminded the public, particularly the elderly and people with chronic illnesses, to adopt appropriate measures to protect their health in view of the cold weather.

A spokesman for the CHP said that cold weather can easily trigger or exacerbate diseases, especially among the elderly and persons suffering from heart disease, respiratory illness or other chronic illnesses.

"Elderly people have less insulating fat beneath their skin to keep them warm and their body temperature control mechanism may be weaker. Their body may not be able to appropriately respond to the cold weather," the spokesman

said.

Some senior persons may have decreased mobility, which can in turn slow down their ability to generate and conserve body heat. Chronic illnesses, such as hypertension, diabetes and endocrine disorders, may undermine the health of elderly people and lower their metabolic rate, subsequently causing their body to generate less heat.

The CHP reminded the public, in particular the elderly and persons with chronic illnesses, to adopt the following preventive measures:

- Take note of the weather forecast. Wear warm clothing, including hats, scarves, gloves and socks accordingly;
- Consume sufficient food to ensure adequate calorie intake;
- Perform regular exercise to facilitate blood circulation and heat production;
- Stay in a warm environment and avoid prolonged outdoor exposure;
- Use heaters with care and maintain adequate indoor ventilation; and
- Seek medical advice if feeling unwell.

In addition, the public should avoid alcoholic beverages.

"Drinking alcohol cannot keep you warm. Alcohol accelerates the loss of body heat through dilated blood vessels, resulting in chilling instead," the spokesman said.

"Parents should ensure that babies are sufficiently warm, but it is also important to keep babies lightly clothed to avoid overheating them," the spokesman added.

Parents should observe the following safety measures when putting their children to bed:

- Keep the room well ventilated and with a comfortable temperature;
- Always place babies on their back to sleep. Babies usually sleep well without a pillow;
- Place babies on a firm and well-fitted mattress to sleep. Avoid soft objects and loose bedding;
- Leave their head, face and arms uncovered during sleep; and
- Let babies sleep in a cot placed in the parents' room and near their bed.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They should adhere to the following advice:

- A surgical mask can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose;

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination, which is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications; and
- Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination early. Please see details of the vaccination programmes and scheme on the CHP's website.

Food-borne diseases, particularly those linked to hot pot cuisine, are also common in cold weather. The following preventive measures should be taken:

- Wash hands before handling and consuming food;
- Do not patronise unlicensed vendors or those with poor hygienic standards while selecting food;
- Wash and cook all food thoroughly;
- Vegetables should be washed thoroughly in clean running water before cooking and consumption. When appropriate, scrub vegetables with hard surfaces with a clean brush to remove dirt and substances, including pesticide residues and contaminants, from the surface and crevices;
- Shrimps should be fully cooked by cooking them until the shells turn red and the flesh turns white and opaque;
- For shellfish like scallops and geoduck, scrub the shells thoroughly and remove internal organs;
- Most hot pot ingredients should be stored in a refrigerator at 4 degrees Celsius or below, while frozen food should be stored in a freezer at -18 degrees C or below;
- Never use raw eggs as a dipping sauce for hot pot; and
- Use different sets of chopsticks to handle raw and cooked food to avoid cross-contamination.

In addition, the public should not use charcoal as a cooking fuel in poorly ventilated areas, especially indoors, to avoid harmful exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) and prevent CO poisoning. While using other kinds of fuel, the public should also ensure adequate ventilation.

For more health information, the public may call the DH's Health Education Hotline (2833 0111) or visit the [CHP's website](#) and [Facebook Fanpage](#).

The public may also call Dial-a-Weather (1878 200) or visit the website of the [Hong Kong Observatory](#) for the latest weather information and forecast, or its page on [Weather Information for Senior Citizens](#).