

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.

CHP reminds public on precautions against cold weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (December 31) 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](#).

Employers and employees should take precautions during cold weather

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals when the Cold Weather Warning is in force:

The Labour Department reminds employers that as the Cold Weather Warning is in force, they should take appropriate precautions such as reminding employees who have to work outdoors or in remote areas to wear appropriately warm clothing, and make arrangements for employees to rotate from outdoor to indoor or sheltered work sites as far as possible. Employees should take note of the weather report, wear appropriately warm clothing and be mindful of their health conditions. They should notify their supervisors and seek medical help immediately if feeling unwell, such as having cold limbs and body shivering.

Attempted murder and attempted suicide in Wan Chai

Police are investigating an attempted murder and attempted suicide case in Wan Chai today (December 30) in which a 43-year-old woman and her 7-year-old son injured.

At 11.48am today, Police received a report that the 43-year-old woman was found hanging inside a unit at 1 Stone Nullah Lane.

Police officers sped to the scene and found the woman hanging with a hemp rope in a room. She was rushed to Ruttonjee Hospital in unconscious state.

Initial investigation revealed that the woman had attempted to strangle her 7-year-old son with a scarf before she attempted to commit suicide. Sustaining neck injuries, the boy was sent to Ruttonjee Hospital in conscious state.

A scarf and a hemp rope in suspected connection with the case were seized at scene.

Active investigation by the District Crime Squad of Wan Chai is underway.

[Advisory Panel on COVID-19 Vaccines held its first meeting \(with photo\)](#)

The Chief Executive has appointed the Advisory Panel on COVID-19 Vaccines (Advisory Panel) (membership list at Annex). The Advisory Panel, chaired by convenor Professor Wallace Lau Chak-sing, held its first meeting today (December 30). Before the meeting, the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, met with members of the Advisory Panel and conveyed her gratitude to the members for providing expert and objective advice for approving vaccines.

The Advisory Panel is set up in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Use of Vaccines) Regulation (Cap. 599K) (the Regulation). The Regulation provides the legal framework for bringing in COVID-19 vaccines which satisfy the criteria of safety, efficacy and quality for emergency use under the present state of public health emergency. The Regulation empowers the Secretary for Food and Health to, based on the objective clinical data of a COVID-19 vaccine, with reference to the expert advice of the Advisory Panel and having regard to the approval given by a regulatory authority in a place outside Hong Kong that performs the function of approving pharmaceutical products (including emergency use), authorise and allow the specified use of the relevant COVID-19 vaccine in Hong Kong under the emergency situation, including vaccination programmes conducted by the Government. Professor Wallace Lau Chak-sing is the convenor of the Advisory Panel and members of the Advisory Panel have rich experience in the areas of public health, infectious diseases, immunology, drug regulation and clinical care.

The Advisory Panel was briefed by the secretariat on the various relevant statutory requirements under the Regulation at the meeting today, including the factors which the Secretary for Food and Health must consider before authorising a COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use, and the role of the Advisory Panel. The meeting also discussed the modus operandi of the Advisory Panel, including the guidance for application for authorisation of vaccines and the information that must be submitted by the applicant. The guidance on the information that must be submitted by the applicant will be uploaded to the website of the Food and Health Bureau for reference (www.fhb.gov.hk/en/our_work/health/rr3.html).

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said, "The Government thanks the expert advisors for accepting the appointment and participating in the work of the emergency use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong. The Government will strive for the early supply of vaccines to Hong Kong and ensure that the vaccines concerned satisfy the relevant requirements and procedures, as well as obtain emergency use approval in accordance with the Regulation, with a

view to ensuring safety, efficacy and quality of vaccines. Our work will be premised on openness and transparency to enable members of the public to access the relevant information on vaccines."

