

Update on latest MERS situation in Saudi Arabia

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (October 3) closely monitoring an additional case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by Saudi Arabia. The CHP again urged the public to pay special attention to safety and take due consideration of the health risks when visiting other places.

According to the WHO, the additional case involves a male aged between 50 and 55 with underlying illnesses. The patient was admitted to the hospital on August 31, and his nasopharyngeal swab tested positive for MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) on September 4. He is fully recovered now.

According to the latest information, 2 614 MERS cases (with 943 deaths) have been reported to the WHO since 2012, among which 2 205 cases were reported by Saudi Arabia (including the patient reported above).

"We will maintain close communication with the WHO and relevant health authorities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"As countries in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, continue to report MERS cases from time to time, travellers should refrain from going to farms, barns or markets with camels and avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry. Most of the cases reported in the Middle East had a history of exposure to camels, consumption of camel milk or contact with other MERS patients," the spokesman said.

"Scientific evidence shows that camels are reservoirs for MERS-CoV. Camels infected with MERS-CoV may not show any signs of infection. Infected animals may shed MERS-CoV through nasal and eye discharge and faeces, and potentially in their milk and urine. The virus may also be found in the raw organs and meat of infected animals. Therefore, the best protection is to practise good hygiene and avoid direct contact with all of these," the spokesman added.

From time to time, suspected MERS cases reported to the CHP for investigation involve patients with a history of contact with camels in the Middle East. The CHP strongly advises travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS-CoV. Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene.

The public may visit the MERS page of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#) to learn more about MERS statistics in [affected areas](#). The public should also refer to the CHP's [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#) and the

WHO's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).