

## [Hong Kong Customs combats sale of counterfeit toys \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs conducted an operation yesterday (December 12) to combat the sale of suspected counterfeit toys. A total of about 1 000 items of suspected counterfeit goods, including board games, children's dolls and stickers, with an estimated market value of about \$30,000 were seized.

Customs earlier received information alleging that suspected counterfeit toys were being sold by shops in the retail market. After an in-depth investigation with the assistance of trademark owners, Customs officers took enforcement action yesterday and raided six retail shops in Sham Shui Po. A total of about 1 000 items of suspected counterfeit goods including board games, children's dolls and stickers were seized.

During the operation, eight women were arrested, including two persons-in-charge and six salespersons aged between 26 and 53.

Investigation is ongoing and all arrested persons have been released on bail pending further investigation.

Customs will continue to step up inspection and enforcement to combat the sale of counterfeit goods.

Customs reminds consumers to procure goods at reputable shops and to check with the trademark owners or their authorised agents if the authenticity of a product is in doubt.

Customs also reminds traders to be cautious and prudent in merchandising since the sale of counterfeit goods is a serious crime and offenders are liable to criminal liability.

Under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance, any person who sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected infringing activities to the Customs 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)).



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## FHB and DH to actively follow up on recommendations of Ombudsman

Regarding the Direct Investigation Report of the Office of the Ombudsman released today (December 13) on the regulation of proprietary Chinese medicine (pCm), the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and the Department of Health (DH) acknowledged that there is room for improvement on the regulation of pCm, and will give further thought and actively follow up on the relevant recommendations of the report.

A spokesman for the FHB said, "We are proceeding to implement the improvement measures including amending the definition of pCm under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549) and providing support to the trade via the \$500 million Chinese Medicine Development Fund.

"Regarding the amendments to the Ordinance, the DH has conducted more than 10 consultation sessions since early this year to collect views on the definition of pCm under the Ordinance from various sectors including the Chinese medicine trade, retailers, the health products trade, the cosmetics and beauty trade, and the Consumer Council. Some 300 submissions were received. The DH has consolidated the recommendations and will soon report to the Chinese Medicines Board under the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (the Council). We plan to brief the Legislative Council about the amendment proposals in the second half of 2019."

The Government is also concerned about the progress of pCm registration. Since implementing the registration system of pCm in 2003, the Board under the Council has established clear guidelines and classification categories based on the compositions and indications of pCm. The Board and the DH have introduced a series of measures, including providing consultancy service for technical support, adjusting the technical requirements and increasing the number of laboratories providing testing service, to assist the trade to complete the reports and furnish other information required for registration.

"At present, all pCm issued with the 'Notice of confirmation of transitional registration of proprietary Chinese medicine' (HKP) currently sold in the market is safe to use by the public. The pCm issued with HKP have submitted test reports that comply with the safety aspect. In recent years, the Government has been proactively providing technical support such that the progress of registration of pCm has significantly improved. The Government will continue to actively explore ways to further expedite the registration of pCm, including providing subsidy to the trade through the Chinese Medicine Development Fund in order to assist them to acquire the necessary technical support and testing service, and to complete the related requirements for the formal registration as soon as possible," the spokesman emphasised.

The DH has been continuously implementing a series of publicity and education campaigns, including issuing letters, visits by "ambassadors", consultation and briefing sessions, 18-district roving exhibitions, pamphlets, television and radio Announcements in Public Interest and information on websites, to enhance the understanding of the public, the trade and other stakeholders on the requirements for pCm registration. The DH will continue to implement relevant publicity and education campaigns.

The FHB and the DH will conduct a study on establishing an accreditation mechanism for Chinese pharmacists as suggested in the report, including clarifying the qualifications and academic requirements for Chinese pharmacists, their scope of duties and functions, and information on existing local training and employment. The trade and the relevant stakeholders will be consulted on the relevant topics.

"The Government has all along been striving to improve the regulation mechanism of Chinese medicine in Hong Kong, and to convey drug safety messages to the public, the trade and other stakeholders via different channels. The Council has also uploaded the list of pCm fulfilling the requirements set out by the Board to its website ([www.cmchk.org.hk/pcm/eng/#main\\_listpcm.htm](http://www.cmchk.org.hk/pcm/eng/#main_listpcm.htm)) for public access, in order to safeguard public health," the spokesman said.

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## **EPD convictions in November**

Ninety-nine convictions were recorded in November 2018 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Fourteen of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 21 were under the Noise Control Ordinance, 57 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, and seven were under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance.

The heaviest fine in November was \$50,000, assessed against a company which contravened the provisions of a licence.

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## **Vigilance against common and travel-**

# related infectious diseases urged in Christmas and New Year holidays

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 13) reminded the public to practise strict hand, personal, food and environmental hygiene to guard against some common and travel-related infectious diseases in the coming Christmas and New Year holidays.

## A. Seasonal influenza

The latest surveillance data revealed that although the overall activity of seasonal influenza (SI) in Hong Kong is still below the baseline level, it has been increasing in the past few weeks. Among the respiratory specimens received by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch, the percentage that tested positive for influenza has increased from 3.35 per cent in the week ending November 17 to 6.25 per cent last week.

Globally, influenza activity also started to increase in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere. The 2018/19 winter influenza season has already started in Canada. Influenza activity in the United States, the United Kingdom and Mainland China has also been increasing recently.

"Based on past epidemiological patterns, we expect that the winter influenza season may arrive soon locally. We appeal to the public, particularly children, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses, to get vaccinated early to better protect themselves against SI," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The public may visit the CHP's webpage on [SI](#) for more information.

## B. Hand, foot and mouth disease

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) occurs throughout the year. While the disease activity is usually higher from May to July, a smaller peak may also occur from October to December.

"The latest surveillance data showed that the activity of HFMD in Hong Kong remains at a high level. So far, 63 cases of Enterovirus 71 (EV71) infection were recorded in 2018 with four of them being severe cases. As young children are more susceptible, parents should stay alert to their health. Institutional outbreaks may occur where HFMD can easily spread among young children with close contact," the spokesman said.

To prevent HFMD, members of the public, and especially the management of institutions, should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the CHP's webpages on [HFMD and EV 71 infection](#) and [Public Health Advice for Play Facilities](#) for more information.

## C. Acute gastroenteritis and food poisoning

Outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) usually occur more frequently in winter. In the festive season, food and environmental hygiene are the keys to preventing AGE and food poisoning while consuming party food or hot pot in gatherings.

The public should consume thoroughly washed and cooked food. For shellfish, the shells should be well scrubbed and the internal organs removed before consumption. Never use raw eggs as a dipping sauce. Use different chopsticks to handle raw and cooked food to avoid cross-contamination. For more information on food safety tips, please visit the [webpage](#) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)'s Centre for Food Safety. The public may also visit the CHP's webpage on [viral gastroenteritis](#) for more information.

## D. Travel-related diseases

- Dengue fever

From November 30 to yesterday (December 12), the CHP recorded one imported dengue fever (DF) case. The patient had been to Thailand during the incubation period.

As of yesterday, 157 cases had been confirmed this year, of which 29 were local cases and 128 were imported cases. The imported cases were mainly from Thailand (35), Mainland China (29) and the Philippines (21).

DF remains endemic in some areas in Asia and beyond. The latest figures for 2018 revealed that 80 065 cases had been recorded in Thailand, 2 946 in Singapore (since December 31, 2017) and 185 in Japan. In Taiwan, 183 local cases have been recorded in 2018. In the Americas, the latest figures indicated that 228 042 and 72 197 cases have been filed in Brazil and Mexico respectively in 2018.

To prevent mosquito-borne diseases, travellers should wear loose, light-coloured, long-sleeved tops and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or exposed parts of the body. Travellers returning from areas affected by DF and Zika virus infection should apply insect repellent for 14 days or at least 21 days respectively upon arrival in Hong Kong.

The public may visit the DF pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), the latest [Travel Health News](#), [tips for using insect repellents](#) and the FEHD's [Guidebook on Control and Prevention of Mosquito Breeding](#) for more information.

- Measles and rubella

Hong Kong achieved measles elimination in 2016 and the annual reported number of measles cases has remained at a very low level in the past few years. The 12-month measles incidence from December 2017 to November 2018 locally was about 1.8 cases per million population. However, measles remains endemic in many places around the world and the incidence levels in these places are much higher than that of Hong Kong.

In Asia, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) (as of November 9), the 12-month measles incidence (cases per million population) had reached 118.5, 80.4, 16.5, 13.3 and 8.4 in the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore respectively. In Europe, measles cases continued to be reported in many countries, with the highest 12-month measles incidence from October 2017 to September 2018 (cases per million population) in Greece (283.1), Romania (92.7), Slovakia (86.7), Italy (42.9), France (41.4) and the United Kingdom (15.5).

Regarding rubella cases, the outbreak of rubella in Japan that started in September this year is ongoing. According to the information from the health authority of Japan, a total of 2 454 rubella cases have been recorded in 2018 (as of December 5), as compared to 93, 126 and 163 cases recorded in 2017, 2016 and 2015 respectively. The weekly number of cases was above 100 in the past 13 weeks. The cumulative incidence (cases per million population) in 2018 was 19.3 with the highest incidence rates in Tokyo (61.7), Chiba (53.7) and Kanagawa (37.5), which were much higher than the annualised incidence of 1.2 cases per million population in Hong Kong (as of December 5).

"Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles and rubella. Members of the public who are planning to travel to places with high incidence or outbreaks of measles or rubella should review their vaccination history and past medical history, especially people born outside Hong Kong who might not have received measles or rubella vaccination during childhood. Those with incomplete vaccination, unknown vaccination history or unknown immunity against measles or rubella are urged to consult their doctor for advice on vaccination at least two weeks before departure," the spokesman said.

"Pregnant women and women preparing for pregnancy who are not immune to measles or rubella as well as children aged under 1 year who are not due for the first dose of the measles, mumps and rubella combined vaccine under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme are advised not to travel to places with outbreaks of measles or rubella," the spokesman added.

For more information on measles and rubella, the public may visit the CHP's [measles page](#) and [rubella page](#). They can also visit the [Travel Health Service's website](#) for the latest travel health advice.

- Middle East Respiratory Syndrome

To prevent Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), travellers in the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels, avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products such as milk and meat, and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. 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 Coronavirus.

The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), 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](#).

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## [Office of The Ombudsman press conference \(with photo\)](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Ms Connie Lau, held a press conference this morning (December 13) to announce the results of the direct investigations on "Social Welfare Department's Monitoring of Services of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly" and on "Government's Regulation of Proprietary Chinese Medicine". The reports are available on the Office of The Ombudsman's website: [ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/en-us/news](http://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/en-us/news).

