

CHP investigates outbreak of acute gastroenteritis at PYNEH

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (May 23) investigating an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) involving staff members, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The Hospital Authority issued a [press release](#) last night (May 22) about staff members of PYNEH experiencing symptoms of gastroenteritis after consuming food purchased from the two hospital canteens. Subsequent to the notification from PYNEH last night, the CHP immediately conducted investigation. As at 3pm today, 43 staff members are identified in the outbreak, (comprising 24 males and 19 females aged 20 to 62) who developed abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea from May 17 to 22. Twenty-eight of the affected persons sought medical attention and none required hospitalisation. All patients are in stable condition. Testing of clinical specimens is in progress.

The CHP's epidemiological investigation revealed that no patients or members of the public are involved in the outbreak so far, and over half of the affected staff members worked in East Block of PYNEH. Meanwhile, it was also revealed that some of the affected staff members did not consume food from the two hospital canteens. In addition, according to a joint site visit and investigation conducted by the CHP and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today, no major irregularities were identified at the two hospital canteens concerned so far. The CFS has provided health education related to food safety and environmental hygiene to the management and staff of the premises. The food premises concerned have already conducted cleaning. Investigations are ongoing.

Based on the currently available evidence, the CHP considers that the outbreak has a higher chance of environmental contamination or person-to-person transmission involving norovirus infection.

The CHP has instructed PYNEH to carry out immediate disinfection to affected areas, especially places visited by the affected persons. Health advice on proper disposal of vomitus, and personal and environmental hygiene were also given.

A spokesman for the CHP reminded that alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses frequently causing AGE, e.g. norovirus. Members of the public are advised to take heed of the following preventive measures against gastroenteritis:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk) or call the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111) for more information.

SJ concludes visit to Middle East (with photos)

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, leading his about 30-strong delegation comprising representatives from the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Bar Association, the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, Invest Hong Kong and related sectors, concluded his visit to the Middle East in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), today (May 23, Dubai time). The visit to the Middle East was conducted with the support of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Dubai and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council.

The delegation first had a meeting with the Chairman of the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr Abdallah Sultan Al Owais, this morning to discuss and explore business opportunities in both places and related matters.

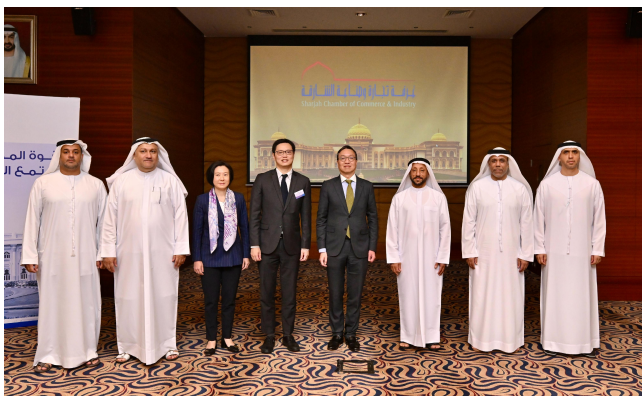
It was followed by a visit to the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) Courts. The DIFC is an onshore financial centre in the UAE offering an independent legal and regulatory framework as well as a common law system. Operated as an independent English language common-law judiciary, the DIFC Courts has jurisdiction to hear civil and commercial disputes both regionally and internationally. During the visit, the President of the Law Society of Hong Kong, Mr Chan Chak-ming, and the Director of the DIFC Courts, Mr Justice Omar Al Mheiri, signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Mr Lam said he was pleased to note that both sides would strengthen their co-operation to

promote exchanges and the development of the legal professional services between Hong Kong and Dubai.

In the afternoon, Mr Lam and his delegation visited Dubai International Arbitration Centre to meet with its Chairman of the Board, Dr Tariq Humaid Al Tayer, to exchange views and share their experiences on the provision of a full spectrum of alternative dispute resolution services.

For the last stop in Dubai, Mr Lam and the delegation had a meeting with the President and CEO of the Dubai Chambers, Mr Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, to learn more about local businesses and their needs for multi-jurisdictional legal services, highlighting Hong Kong's robust legal system and the its strengths in international legal and dispute resolution services.

Mr Lam will leave Dubai in the evening, and will arrive in Hong Kong tomorrow morning (May 24, Hong Kong time).



[Public urged to stay alert to WhatsApp messages purported to be sent by District Officers](#)

A spokesman for the Home Affairs Department (HAD) today (May 23)

appealed to members of the public to stay alert to fraudulent WhatsApp messages purported to be sent by the District Officers (DOs).

The spokesman stressed that HAD and DOs have no connection with the fraudulent messages, and has reported the case to the Police. Members of the public are reminded to stay alert to suspicious messages and not to disclose any personal information.

Government to remove oyster rafts not authorised to temporarily remain in Deep Bay starting from next month

The Government's inter-departmental working group responsible for tackling management issues of oyster rafts in Deep Bay announced today (May 23) that in accordance with the first phase of the management plan, existing oyster rafts in Deep Bay without authorisation to temporarily remain (i.e. oyster rafts without markers) will be removed starting from next month.

The working group announced on July 25, 2023 that a freezing survey of the number and locations of oyster rafts in Deep Bay had completed. Last September, based on results of the freezing survey, the working group requested relevant local oyster farmers to submit records of their oyster cultivation activities. Subsequently, the working group provided markers with unique identification numbers to farmers which had submitted records, and required them to attach these markers to their corresponding oyster rafts for the working group to inspect.

Oyster rafts attached with markers provided by the working group may temporarily remain in Deep Bay, and the working group will handle these rafts in the next phase of the management plan. Other oyster farmers in the area must remove oyster rafts without the said markers and all associated items on or before May 31. Otherwise, the working group will take appropriate action starting from next month under the Shipping and Port Control Ordinance (Cap. 313), including removal of such rafts.

A spokesman for the working group said, "Oyster rafts without markers provided by the working group are not permitted to remain in Deep Bay after May 31. Otherwise, they will be removed accordingly, and relevant persons may also be legally liable. The working group will assess factors such as navigational safety, water quality, and environmental conditions in Deep Bay, as well as the condition of oyster rafts authorised to temporarily remain in the next stage. With reference to this assessment, the working group will determine the culture area, actual number of oyster rafts, and culture locations to be permitted for oyster cultivation in Deep Bay under the management plan."

The Government's inter-departmental working group consists of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the Lands Department, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Marine Department, the Environmental Protection Department, and the Home Affairs Department. Members of the public can call 2150 7093, fax to 2314 2866 or email mailbox@afcd.gov.hk to contact the working group.

DH appeals for vaccination at appropriate times against respiratory tract infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 23) reminded that, local seasonal influenza and COVID-19 remain active while the influenza activity persists at a high level, it is believed that the current influenza season would continue for a period of time. The CHP appealed to members of the public to heighten their vigilance, and vaccination can effectively lower the risks of serious illness and death. Members of the public, especially high-risk groups, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) and COVID-19 vaccines in a timely manner.

The CHP has been closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong. Surveillance data as at May 18 revealed that the local COVID-19 activity is comparable to the past few weeks, and KP.2 variants are detected among sewage surveillance and human infection cases. The sewage surveillance data as at May 14 revealed that JN.1 and its descendant lineages remained the most prevalent variant, comprising 98.8 per cent of all characterised specimens, and about 15 per cent belong to KP.2. According to information from the World Health Organization (WHO), KP.2 is one of the descendant lineages of JN.1 and is now assigned by the WHO as one of the variants being monitored. With regard to human infection cases, the test results for non-severe cases carried out by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) of the CHP from May 8 to 21 revealed that JN.1 remained the most prevalent variant comprising 100 per cent of all characterised specimens, and about 6.7 per cent of all belongs to the newer descendant strain KP.2.

For seasonal influenza, as at the week ending May 18, the percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for seasonal influenza viruses received by the PHLSB and Hospital Authority was 12.85 per cent. The majority of positive detections were influenza A(H1) (around 91 per cent), showing a shift from influenza A(H3) which was the dominating virus during January to March this year. The influenza admission rate in public hospitals was 0.95 cases per 10 000 population. Both have remained at a high level.

A spokesman for the CHP said that vaccination is safe and effective for

preventing seasonal influenza and COVID-19. The Government has long been committed to encouraging members of the public to receive SIV. Since the launch of the 2023/24 season SIV programmes from September last year, a total of over 1.86 million doses of SIV have been administered so far, representing an increase of 20 per cent compared with the same period of last season. The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases under the CHP opined that SIV are effective against influenza A (including H1 and H3) and B. Members of the public who have not received SIV, in particular high risk groups such as young children, the elderly and chronic disease patients, should get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the CHP strongly appeals to high risk groups to receive a COVID-19 booster as soon as possible. Regardless of the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses received previously, they could receive a booster dose to be given at least six months after the last dose or COVID-19 infection (whichever is later). The Government's free COVID-19 vaccination programme currently provides ample time slots to cater to scheduling requirements. High-risk groups should receive vaccination in a timely manner for enhanced personal protection. Since the rollout of the administration of XBB mRNA vaccines on December 14, as at May 22, about 178 000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered. Among them, about 139 000 doses were XBB mRNA vaccine.

Since the launch of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, the Government has set up an online booking system which is available around the clock (booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk). Members of the public may choose the desired vaccines and make a reservation via the system for COVID-19 vaccination at Private Clinic COVID-19 Vaccination Stations, Children Community Vaccination Centres, designated General Outpatient Clinics under the Hospital Authority, or designated Student Health Service Centres, Maternal and Child Health Centres and Elderly Health Centres under the DH. Elderly people living in the community aged 60 or above may seek assistance for making online bookings of COVID-19 vaccination at the Social Welfare Department 's District Elderly Community Centres and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (www.swd.gov.hk/en/pubsvc/elderly/cat_commsupp/elderly_centres/) or the Health Bureau's District Health Centres (DHCs) and DHC Expresses (www.dhc.gov.hk/en/index.html). Apart from providing COVID-19 vaccination services for members and non-members aged 65 or above, designated Elderly Health Centres (EHCs) (www.elderly.gov.hk/english/contactus/elderly_health_centres.html) of the DH will also provide assistance for elderly people in need to make online bookings for COVID-19 vaccines which are not provided at that EHC. Apart from making online bookings for COVID-19 vaccination, members of the public may also call the Private Clinic COVID-19 Vaccination Stations to enquire about relevant vaccination services. The full list of the stations can be accessed at www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list_pcvs_covid_eng.pdf.

For the sake of convenience, COVID-19 vaccine can be co-administered with SIV. Details of receiving both COVID-19 vaccination and SIV are available online (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106096.html).

For the latest information, please visit the CHP's [COVID-19 & Flu](#)

[Express](#) and [influenza page](#). As for vaccination, the public may visit the [COVID-19 Vaccination Programme website](#) and [Vaccination Schemes page](#).