

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on November 13 to noon today (November 14), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 168 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 100 239 samples of food imported from Japan (including 64 167 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 22 312 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Suspension of “A Symphony of Lights”

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations.

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

The Tourism Commission announces that as the Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Strong Wind Signal No. 3, "A Symphony of Lights" will be cancelled tonight (November 14).

Government clarifies statement on nomination of US Secretary of State

It has come to the Government's attention that a statement seemingly issued by the Government regarding the nomination of the US Secretary of State was circulated in the social media. In this regard, a Government spokesman today (November 14) clarified that the Government has not issued any such statement, the content of which is fabricated.

DH participates in WHO's IHR Exercise Crystal 2024 to enhance public health emergency preparedness and response systems (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH), yesterday (November 13), participated in the annual International Health Regulations (IHR) Exercise Crystal organised by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO) to enhance public health emergency preparedness and response systems. The IHR Exercise Crystal 2024 simulated an outbreak of a vector-borne disease to enable participants to complete the triggering tasks in response to the evolving scenario. The WHO also arranged a debriefing and experience-sharing session. Representatives of the Environment and Ecology

Bureau (EEB) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) also joined the exercise.

The IHR Exercise Crystal is an annual exercise conducted by the WPRO virtually through video conference and other communication tools to test the communication mechanism of IHR focal points encompassing public health event reporting, verification, notification, communication and risk assessment, etc. Being one of the IHR focal points, the Centre for Health Protection of the DH has been participating in IHR Exercise Crystal for years.

The exercise simulated the occurrence of a vector-borne disease locally which is uncommon in the Western Pacific region. This infectious disease has symptoms similar to those of dengue fever (DF) and Zika virus infection. The Exercise tested the responses of each unit, which covered soliciting key information from the WHO and relevant contact points to facilitate immediate risk assessment, reporting to the WHO upon emergence of relevant local cases, notifying other countries on the latest local situation, assessment on cross-border spreading of the disease, etc. Representatives of the DH, the EEB and the FEHD discussed and co-ordinated the cross-sectoral response required in the simulated scenario, and reported to the WHO. Representatives from Hong Kong also shared their experiences with the host of the WPRO and other participants during the debriefing and experience-sharing session.

Vector-borne disease is transmitted by vector organisms, for example, arthropods including mosquitoes, lice and mites. DF, malaria and Zika virus infection are common examples of vector-borne diseases in Hong Kong and neighbouring areas. Preventive measures include avoiding bites by vector organisms and pest control measures. The Government has an interdepartmental co-ordination mechanism in place, such as regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the pest control measures through the Pest Control Steering Committee, and formulating comprehensive contingency plans in response to some vector-borne diseases that pose public health threats, to ensure timely responses to relevant diseases that might emerge in Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the DH said, "As climate change becomes drastic, vector-borne diseases have brought huge public health threats globally. The exercise provides an opportunity to strengthen the communications with the WHO, and tests the cross-sectoral co-ordination mechanism against vector-borne disease in the local setting. We will consolidate the experience gained from this exercise and further strengthen the co-ordination with the WHO and other government departments."



Public urged to keep healthy lifestyle to prevent diabetes

The Department of Health (DH) today (November 14) urged members of the public to keep a healthy lifestyle to prevent diabetes mellitus (or simply, diabetes) in support of World Diabetes Day, which is held annually on November 14.

Diabetes is a common chronic condition marked by high levels of glucose in the blood. Improper diabetic control may lead to serious damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys and nerves. About one in 10 adults globally have diabetes, and close to half are unaware that they are living with the condition. Among the main types of diabetes (type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes), type 2 diabetes is the most common form which makes up about 95 per cent of all diabetes cases. Key factors that contribute to developing type 2 diabetes include being overweight and obese, not getting enough exercise, and genetics.

"The Population Health Survey 2020-22 conducted by the DH revealed that the local prevalence of diabetes substantially increased from 5.3 per cent among persons aged 45 to 54 to 14.9 per cent among persons aged 55 to 64 and 19.0 per cent among persons aged 65 to 84. In 2023, there were 570* registered deaths attributed to diabetes, with a crude death rate of 7.6* per 100 000 population," a spokesman for the DH said.

Regardless of genetic risk, lifestyle changes are the best way to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. Members of the public are urged to reach and keep a healthy body weight; stay physically active with at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or equivalent amount and intensity of physical activity throughout the week; eat a healthy diet and limit sugar and saturated fat intake; and avoid drinking alcohol or smoking.

The spokesman said that walking as a way of conducting physical activity can guard against various chronic diseases and reduce the risk of type 2

diabetes. With an aim to encourage members of the public to increase their physical activities, the DH launched the 10,000 Steps a Day Campaign in 2022 to encourage adults to gradually increase their daily step goal to 10 000 based on their own physical conditions, abilities, pace and individual circumstances. The campaign has entered its third phase this year, and this year's event coincides with the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Health Bureau and the DH for the first time partnered with the Greater Bay Area Mainland cities to jointly promote walking to mark the celebration. The Walking Challenge in Hong Kong commenced on November 1.

The risk of type 2 diabetes rises with age, and early detection of diabetes and intervention is crucial for reducing the risk of developing related complications. The Government launched the three-year Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme (CDCC Pilot Scheme) in November 2023 to provide subsidies to Hong Kong residents aged 45 or above with no known medical history of diabetes or hypertension to undergo diabetes and hypertension screening and receive long-term follow-up by a paired Family Doctor of their choice.

The Scheme has been well received since its rollout. As at October 22, 2024, around 73 000* members of the public have participated in the Scheme. Among the participants who have completed the screening, nearly 40 per cent* have been diagnosed with prediabetes (Note), diabetes or hypertension. They can then receive long-term follow-up care in the community including medical consultations, medications, services by nursing clinics, allied health and laboratory investigations provided by their family doctor, District Health Centre (DHC)/ DHC Express and other healthcare providers according to clinical conditions. The Government will expand the service scope of the Scheme to cover blood lipid tests to enable more comprehensive assessment and proper management of the risk factors (including high blood pressure, high blood glucose and high blood lipids) of cardiovascular diseases in 2025. For more details, members of the public may browse the thematic website of the CDCC Pilot Scheme (www.primaryhealthcare.gov.hk/cdcc/en).

To contain the prevalence of diabetes, the Government will continue organising health promotional campaigns to enhance public awareness about the importance of healthy living, enabling persons at risk to have regular measurements of blood glucose. The Government will also work in close partnership with community partners to foster a health-enhancing environment.

To know more about the Government's initiatives and actions to prevent and control non-communicable diseases including diabetes, please visit the Change for Health website of the DH (www.change4health.gov.hk).

*Provisional figures

Note: A blood glucose level ranging from 6.0 to 6.4 per cent for glycated haemoglobin or a fasting glucose level of 6.1 to 6.9 mmol/L.