

CHP announces four new confirmed melioidosis infection cases over past week

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (December 9) said that four new confirmed melioidosis infection cases had been recorded in the past week (December 3 to 9). All of them live in Sham Shui Po. The CHP's epidemiological investigations revealed that these cases were not recently infected, and developed symptoms during the period from mid-August to early November. They were confirmed to have been infected with melioidosis upon further testing recently.

The first case involves a 93-year-old female who has multiple underlying illnesses. She developed a fever and vomiting since October 15. She attended the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department of Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) and was admitted on the same day. She was later discharged after her condition became stable. She was hospitalised again on November 14 due to persistent fever and was discharged on November 21. She attended the A&E Department of CMC on November 24 due to vomiting and was admitted for treatment. She is still hospitalised and her current condition is stable. Her blood specimen was confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

The second case involves an 86-year-old female who has multiple underlying illnesses. She has developed a persistent fever and poor appetite since August 13 and attended the A&E Department of CMC on September 24. She was admitted on the same day and was later discharged after her condition became stable. She developed foot swelling since November 8 and attended the A&E Department of Princess Margaret Hospital on November 12, and was admitted for treatment. She is still hospitalised and her current condition is stable. Her ankle abscess specimen was confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

The third case involves a 65-year-old male who has diabetes and blood lipid disorder. He developed loin pain and urinary discomfort on October 21 and sought medical consultation from a private doctor. He attended the A&E Department of CMC on November 28 under referral due to persistent symptoms as well as fever and abdominal pain. He was admitted on the same day. He is still hospitalised and his current condition is stable. His blood and liver abscess specimens were confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

The fourth case involves a 90-year-old female who has multiple underlying illnesses. She developed haematuria and leg swelling since November 7 and sought medical consultation at a general out-patient clinic. She attended the A&E Department of CMC on November 16 due to persistent symptoms and fever. She was admitted on the same day. She is still hospitalised and her current condition is serious. Her blood specimen was

confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

Epidemiological investigations of the aforementioned cases are ongoing. A total of 42 melioidosis infection cases have been recorded in Hong Kong so far this year, among which 26 cases living in Sham Shui Po were recorded since August.

The Government has earlier gazetted to include melioidosis as a statutorily notifiable infectious disease under Schedule 1 to the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599). The CHP will continue to work closely with the Hospital Authority to enhance surveillance against melioidosis cases.

With the CHP's epidemiological investigations earlier and various measures, a notable drop in the number of melioidosis infection cases over the past few weeks has been observed. Counting by the onset date of symptoms, 12, eight and 11 cases were recorded in August, September and October this year respectively. During the past month or so from November till today, only two cases had onset of symptoms with the latest one developing symptoms on November 7.

A spokesman for the CHP reiterated that person-to-person transmission and animal-to-human transmission are rare, but melioidosis bacteria can survive in the local environment. Melioidosis is an endemic disease in Hong Kong and melioidosis cases have been recorded in Hong Kong each year. According to literature, infection cases are more common after typhoons or storms. The bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei* of melioidosis in soil and muddy water may become exposed to the ground after typhoons or storms, and the bacteria could spread more easily with strong winds or storms. As such, the number of melioidosis cases may increase.

â€‹The CHP appealed to members of the public to seek medical advice if they develop symptoms, in particular people with diabetes or other immunocompromised conditions, in order to receive appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment. For more information on melioidosis, please visit the website of the CHP at www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/101110.html.