

CHP announces new confirmed melioidosis infection cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (November 10) said that three new confirmed melioidosis infection cases had been recorded from October 14 to November 10.

The first case involves a 77-year-old male with underlying illnesses who lives in Kwun Tong. He developed decrease in appetite since early October. He was sent to the Accident and Emergency Department of United Christian Hospital on October 11 due to deterioration of general condition and high blood sugar level, and was admitted on the same day. He is in stable condition.

The second case involves a 92-year-old male with underlying illnesses who lived in Tsing Yi. He developed decrease in appetite since October 20. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Princess Margaret Hospital on October 27 due to deterioration of general condition, and was admitted on the same day. He passes away on November 6 and the cause of death is under investigation.

The third case involves an 85-year-old male with underlying illnesses who lives in Cheung Chau. He had a persistent cough since April. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Mary Hospital on November 1 due to fever and coughing up blood, and was admitted on the same day. He is in stable condition.

Their clinical specimens were confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

The CHP has not found any epidemiological link between the three new cases, nor has it found any epidemiological link between them and other confirmed cases of melioidosis recorded earlier in Hong Kong. The CHP is investigating the infection source of the case. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing. A total of 15 melioidosis infection cases have been recorded in Hong Kong this year. In 2022, 46 melioidosis infection cases were recorded.

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.

The CHP reminded members of the public that melioidosis can be spread by

contaminated soil and water during and after typhoons and storms. Where practicable, they should stay indoor during typhoons and storms, avoid travelling to areas with potential flooding, and do not wade or have contact with muddy water and soil. In addition, high-risk individuals should avoid paths near stormwater drains where aerosols may be generated from contaminated water.

Members of the public should also take the following preventive measures against infection:

- Avoid contact with contaminated soil;
- Wear appropriate protective clothing or footwear when participating in activities with possible contact with soil or water, e.g. using gloves and wearing boots. High-risk individuals may consider to wear a surgical mask in addition;
- Wash or shower after exposure to contaminated water or soil;
- Always clean any wounds as soon as possible and cover any cuts or grazes with waterproof dressings;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water after handling soil or gardening;
- Observe food hygiene and avoid drinking raw water; and
- Travellers can contract the disease through outdoor water sports. Risk of infection can be minimised by avoiding exposure to water sources (such as rivers, ponds or lakes) that might be contaminated.

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.