

CHP announces two new confirmed melioidosis infection cases over past week

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (August 16) said that two new confirmed melioidosis infection cases had been recorded in the past week (August 9 to 15).

The first case involves a 91-year-old female with underlying illnesses who lives in Sham Shui Po. She developed a cough on July 7. She was admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital from July 21 to 24 due to a fall and pneumonia. She visited the Caritas Medical Centre on July 31 due to generalised weakness and was admitted on the same day. She is in stable condition. Her clinical sample was confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

The second case involves a 49-year-old male with underlying illnesses who lives in Southern District. He developed a cough, runny nose, sore throat, fever and chills starting August 4, and sought medical attention at Gleneagles Hospital on August 6, where he was diagnosed with a chronic disease. He then went to the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Mary Hospital on August 7 and was admitted on the same day. His clinical sample was confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing. He is in stable condition.

The CHP is investigating the infection source of the cases. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing. So far, nine melioidosis infection cases have been recorded in Hong Kong this year. In 2023, 17 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, people should stay indoors during typhoons and storms, avoid travelling to areas with potential flooding, and refrain from wading in or coming into 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 also consider wearing a surgical mask;
- 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.

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.