

CHP closely monitors cluster of pneumonia cases on Mainland

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 31) closely monitoring a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, Hubei Province, and has contacted the National Health Commission for further information.

According to an announcement from the Health Commission of Hubei Province, a number of pneumonia cases related to a local seafood market was recently reported in Wuhan. The Wuhan Municipal Health Commission has commenced investigation and so far identified 27 cases. Among them, seven cases were serious and the remaining were stable. Symptoms were mainly fever while a few had presented with shortness of breath. All patients are isolated and receiving treatment. Contact tracing of close contacts and medical surveillance are ongoing.

The Wuhan Municipal Health Commission announced that assessment by relevant experts revealed that the cases were compatible with viral pneumonia. For the time being, no obvious human-to-human transmission has been observed and no healthcare workers have been infected. The causative pathogen and cause of infection are still under investigation.

Locally, while surveillance, prevention and control measures are in place, the CHP will remain vigilant and work closely with the World Health Organization and relevant health authorities to monitor the latest developments.

The CHP's Port Health Division conducts health surveillance measures at all boundary control points. Thermal imaging systems are in place for body temperature checks on inbound travellers. Suspected cases with serious infectious diseases identified will be immediately referred to public hospitals for isolation, treatment and follow-up. The CHP has also informed the Hospital Authority about the cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan.

Travellers are reminded to wear surgical masks and seek medical attention if they present with respiratory symptoms, and reveal their travel history to doctors. The CHP will continue to closely monitor the latest situation of the cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan and update the surveillance criteria and testing strategies accordingly.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes; after touching public installations such as handrails or

door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretion after coughing or sneezing.

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel or hand dryer. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative.
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly.
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

The public should take heed of the health advice below when travelling outside Hong Kong:

- Avoid touching poultry/birds or their droppings, and avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms;
- Avoid making close contact with patients, especially those with symptoms of acute respiratory infections;
- Adhere to food safety and hygiene rules such as avoiding consuming raw or undercooked animal products, including milk, eggs and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or contaminated products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled.
- If feeling unwell when outside Hong Kong, especially if having a fever or cough, wear a surgical mask, inform the hotel staff or tour escort and seek medical advice at once.
- After returning to Hong Kong, consult a doctor promptly if having a fever or other symptoms, inform the doctor of recent travel history and wear a surgical mask to help prevent spread of the disease.