

CHP closely monitors confirmed case of infection of novel coronavirus in Thailand

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health said today (January 14) that the CHP has been closely monitoring a new confirmed case of infection of novel coronavirus in Thailand reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). The public is again urged to maintain strict personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel.

According to information from the health authority of Thailand, the case involved a patient from Wuhan, Hubei Province, in Mainland China, who arrived at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, on January 8 and was detected to be having high fever. The patient was subsequently taken to a local medical institute for isolation and management. Laboratory tests there returned a positive result for the novel coronavirus on January 12. The patient has recovered and there have not been additional cases.

The WHO said it is working with officials in the Mainland and Thailand following the report. It pointed out that the possibility of cases being identified in other countries was not unexpected and has also issued guidance on how to detect and treat patients infected with the novel coronavirus.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "The CHP will continue to maintain its liaison with the WHO, the health authority of Thailand and the National Health Commission, and closely monitor the situation for risk assessment. Port health measures will be adjusted as and when appropriate."

In response to the pneumonia cases infected with the novel coronavirus in Wuhan, the Port Health Division (PHD) of the CHP has earlier strengthened port health measures and enhanced temperature screening of travellers with increased frequency of random checking at all boundary control points. An additional thermal imaging system dedicated for temperature screening of travellers from flights arriving in Hong Kong from Wuhan has been put in place at Hong Kong International Airport.

Moreover, additional temperature checks using handheld infrared thermometers for all inbound travellers during the periods when the two daily high-speed trains with stops at Wuhan arrive in Hong Kong are conducted to ensure that the body temperatures of all passengers from these two trains are checked. Travellers with fever and acute respiratory symptoms who had visited Wuhan within 14 days prior to the onset of illness will be immediately referred to public hospitals for isolation, treatment and follow-up.

The PHD has advised the MTR Corporation Limited, the Airport Authority Hong Kong and relevant airlines to strengthen the cleaning and disinfection work for the high-speed trains and aircraft arriving in Hong Kong from Wuhan.

Cleaning and disinfection work for West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and airport terminal buildings have also been stepped up. Furthermore, the PHD has enhanced the dissemination of health messages through broadcast to travellers in, for example, flight cabins and West Kowloon Station, distribution of leaflets, displaying posters and promulgating travel health news via website. The PHD will continue to maintain close liaison with stakeholders of all boundary control points to update them in a timely manner about the latest situation and relevant measures.

A dedicated webpage (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html) has been set up by the CHP to provide relevant information and health advice. To address the public's concern, the CHP will announce the details of cases fulfilling the reporting criteria (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/enhanced_sur_pneumonia_wuhan_eng.pdf) on the above webpage daily to enhance transparency.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always 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 secretions 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. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing 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; and
- 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 animals (including game), poultry/birds or their droppings;
- avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms;
- avoid making close contact with patients, especially those with symptoms of acute respiratory infections;
- do not consume game meat and do not patronise food premises where game meat is served;
- 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; and
- 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.