

CHP closely monitors plague case in Ordos

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 24) closely monitoring a bubonic plague case in Ordos, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

According to the Health Commission in Ordos, the female patient, who is a livestock farm worker, developed symptoms on August 14 and was diagnosed to have bubonic plague on August 21. She has been admitted to hospital for treatment and is in critical condition. Close contacts of the patient have remained asymptomatic so far and tested negative for plague.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Plague is transmitted from an infected animal (mainly rodents) to humans through the bite of its fleas. Plague can also be contracted when cuts or other breaks in the skin come into contact with the body fluid or tissue of infected animals. Consumption of infected animal tissues and inhalation of infected respiratory droplets are also a possible mode of transmission."

The spokesman explained that bubonic plague is a kind of plague which is not usually transmitted directly from person to person unless there is contact with pus from suppurating buboes. Patients infected with bubonic plague usually present with fever, headache and painful swelling of the regional lymph nodes, especially around the groin. The infection can progress to septicaemic plague when the bacteria invade the blood stream.

The spokesman reminded travellers to avoid visiting plague-endemic areas. They should also heighten vigilance on rodents and prevent flea bites. Insect repellents against mosquitoes may equally prevent flea bites and deter blood-sucking insects. Formulations in lotions or sprays should contain DEET, IR3535 or icaridin (also known as picaridin) as active ingredients. The public should refer to the CHP's [tips for using insect repellents](#).

"Travellers returning from affected areas with a sudden onset of fever, shaking chills, body pains or chest discomfort should seek medical advice as soon as possible and reveal their travel history for prompt investigation and management. Plague is a statutorily notifiable disease and doctors should report suspected or confirmed cases to the CHP for investigations and control," the spokesman added.

Travellers should take heed of the health advice below during travel:

- Prevent flea bites by wearing long-sleeved shirts and trousers, and applying insect repellent/insecticide. DEET-containing insect repellent can be applied to exposed skin and clothing, while insecticide containing permethrin can be applied to clothing, not the skin;
- Avoid going to rural areas, camping or hunting;

- Never eat or touch rodents, dead animals and their tissues or contaminated materials;
- Avoid close contact with patients, especially those with cough or chest infection;
- Avoid going to crowded areas;
- Seek medical care immediately in case of a sudden onset of fever, chills, painful lymph nodes, difficulty in breathing with coughing and/or blood-tainted sputum; and
- Consult a doctor immediately after contact or exposure to pneumonic plague patients or high-risk exposures, such as bites from fleas or direct contact with body fluids or tissues of potentially infected animals, for prompt assessment of the need for preventive medication.

Travellers may visit the CHP's [plague page](#), [Travel Health News](#) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department's [advice on rodent control](#) for details.