

CHP investigates 44 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has announced that as of 0.00am, August 17, the CHP was investigating 44 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 4 525 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 4 524 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, 13 had a travel history during the incubation period.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

A spokesman for the DH reminded travellers that its Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) will be relocated to the Midfield Concourse in the restricted area of Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) tomorrow (August 18). From 4am tomorrow, those arriving in Hong Kong via HKIA will be required to proceed to the TSCC set up in the restricted area of HKIA for collecting their deep throat saliva (DTS) samples immediately upon arrival. They will need to stay at the TSCC to wait for test results, which will usually be available on the same day before they can proceed with immigration procedures and collection of their checked-in baggage. As the waiting time could be up to 12 hours or more, travellers are advised to prepare to carry with them all necessities in sufficient quantities before boarding the plane.

Passengers whose test results will not be available on the same day (usually passengers arriving in the afternoon or at night) can proceed with immigration procedures right after their DTS samples are collected at the TSCC. They will subsequently be taken to the DH's Holding Centre for Test Results (HCTR) in a hotel by coaches arranged by the DH to wait for their test results. The DH will start using Dorsett Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong, today as the HCTR. The DH also expressed gratitude to Regal Oriental Hotel and its staff for their assistance in fighting the epidemic over the past months.

The DH will make flexible arrangements according to the capacity of the facilities and the daily number of passengers arriving on afternoon flights. If necessary, inbound travellers arriving in the afternoon could also be arranged to wait for test results at the TSCC.

In view of the severe epidemic situation, the CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. As a number of recent cases involve elderly people, the CHP

strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infections and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

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

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- 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.