

CHP investigates nine additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 0.00am, November 18, the CHP was investigating nine additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 5 480 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 5 479 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, six had a travel history during the incubation period, one was local case with unknown sources while the other two were epidemiologically linked with a local case.

The case with unknown sources involves a 76-year-old man (case 5 479) who had developed cough on November 10 and shortness of breath on November 16. The patient sought medical attention at Prince of Wales Hospital on November 16 and was admitted. He is a taxi driver and last went to work on November 16.

A total of 125 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (November 4 – 17), including 31 local cases of which 18 are from unknown sources.

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).

Starting today, the DH will disallow visitors for any person under compulsory quarantine in hotels during the quarantine period. If confinees have the need to replenish goods or food, their friends, family members or hotel staff can place them outside the guestrooms for the confinees to pick up without face-to-face contact. If a person under compulsory hotel quarantine requires the company of a carer which requires prior permission from DH, the carer also has to be quarantined in the hotel till the end of the quarantine period.

The Government strongly appeals to the confinees to follow the quarantine requirement strictly in order to protect the health of their own selves and others. The measure is of utmost importance to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 in the community. Breaking Quarantine Orders is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum imprisonment of six months and a fine of \$25,000.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "During the CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases, we will compile and upload (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/building_list_eng.pdf) a list of buildings that confirmed patients had visited from two days before the onset

of symptoms. Given that cases of local infection continue to occur from time to time, members of the public are urged to seek medical attention immediately if they believe that they had visited the same place at an identical time with a confirmed patient and feel unwell subsequently. If they remain asymptomatic but are concerned that they have been infected, they can also visit the Hospital Authority's designated general out-patient clinics (www.ha.org.hk/haho/ho/covid-19/GOPC_extend_EN.pdf) to obtain specimen collection packs and collect deep throat saliva specimens for free COVID-19 testing."

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. 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.

The spokesman 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 infection 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.