

# CHP investigates suspected Mycobacterium abscessus infection cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (November 2) investigating a suspected Mycobacterium abscessus infection cluster involving five customers who have received injections at a premises under the name of "Gals Glam Beauty" (with Instagram social media account of "90s\_\_beautygirls" or "galsglam.beauty"). People who have patronised "Gals Glam Beauty" and received relevant injections or suspect they have experienced relevant symptoms, are urged to seek medical attention and contact the CHP as soon as possible.

The infection cluster involved five females aged 26 to 53. They have patronised "Gals Glam Beauty" and received injection services claiming to have slimming effects from June to August this year at premises respectively located at 6/F, Hop Hing Industrial Building, 702-704 Castle Peak Road, Lai Chi Kok or 10/F, Block A, Alexandra Industrial Building, 23-27 Wing Hong Street, Lai Chi Kok. Each treatment included four to five injections. The five females developed a rash, induration and abscess, one day to few weeks after the injection. All patients have sought medical attention and two of them were admitted for treatment, among which one is still hospitalised. Abscess samples of the two admitted patients grew Mycobacterium abscessus and all patients are in stable condition.

Upon receiving relevant information of the cases, the CHP took immediate actions and conducted on-site investigations at the relevant premises with the Police yesterday (November 1) and today. Investigations include the professional qualification of the personnel responsible for the infections, if it involved possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products or unlicensed medical practice etc. Acting on the information provided by the patients, the CHP also visited two other premises located at 4/F, Wing Hong Centre, 18 Wing Hong Street, Lai Chi Kok, and 12/F, I Do Centre, 749A Nathan Road, Prince Edward, for follow-up investigation. Investigations are ongoing.

The CHP has set up an enquiry hotline (2125 2372) for the related infection cases, which operates from Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) from 9am to 5.30pm, starting tomorrow (November 3). The hotline will also operate from 9am to 1pm on November 4 and 5 to receive enquiries. Persons who presented with symptoms such as skin redness, rash, purulent or induration after receiving injections at the above premises should seek medical attention and call the hotline immediately. Officers of the CHP will assess their condition and arrange for a follow-up as appropriate.

"Mycobacterium abscessus is found in water, soil, and dust. It has been known to contaminate medications and medical devices. Infection with Mycobacterium abscessus is usually caused by injections of substances contaminated with the bacterium or through invasive medical procedures

employing contaminated equipment or material. Infection can also occur after accidental injury where the wound is contaminated by soil. There is very little risk of transmission from person to person. Mycobacterium abscessus can cause a variety of infections including skin and the soft tissues under the skin. Individuals with underlying respiratory conditions or impaired immune systems are at risk of lung infection. Skin infected with Mycobacterium abscessus is usually red, warm, tender to the touch, swollen, and/or painful. Infected areas can also develop purulent or induration. Other signs of Mycobacterium abscessus infection are fever, chills, muscle aches, and a general feeling of illness," a spokesman for the DH said.

The spokesman added that treatment of infections due to Mycobacterium abscessus consists of draining collections of pus or removing the infected tissue and administering the appropriate combination of antibiotics, while infection with this bacterium usually might not improve with the usual antibiotics used to treat general skin infections. Case doctors should pay attention to the treatment result of the medicines.

Based on information obtained in a preliminary investigation, the CHP cannot rule out the possibility of unlicensed medical practice. The DH reminded members of the public that injection procedures should only be performed by a locally registered doctor. Customers should look for his or her full name against the [list of registered doctors](#) of the Medical Council of Hong Kong as well as his or her professional qualifications and relevant experience. The DH also urged the public to observe the health advice below before receiving injections:

- Understand the procedure, potential risks and complications before receiving injections. Consult a doctor for an informed decision;
- Do not receive an injection in the case of a history of allergy to the injection, or infection or inflammation on the injection site;
- Request the full name of the doctor in writing if referred by a beauty service provider for the procedure, as well as the professional qualifications and relevant experience; and
- If symptoms develop, such as fever or feeling unwell, seek medical attention immediately.

â€‹The public may visit the DH's webpage on the [differentiation between medical procedures and beauty services](#) and the [Drug Database](#) of the Drug Office for more information.â€‹