

CHP investigates three additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, May 13, the CHP was investigating three additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 818 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 817 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, two are imported cases and one is epidemiologically linked with a local case.

The newly reported case with an epidemiological link with a local case involves a 40-year-old woman (case number: 11816) who is a household contact of case 11815 and she tested positive for immunoglobulin G earlier. Cases 11815 and 11816 both attended a family gathering on April 13 with case 11672 at Fung Hing House of Hing Wah (II) Estate in Chai Wan. Cases 11815 and 11816 subsequently attended another gathering at 37 Fuk Wing Street in Sham Shui Po on April 18, which was also attended by three cases involving the N501Y mutant strain confirmed earlier, i.e. cases 11773, 11793 and 11797.

One of the newly reported imported cases involves a 43-year-old male patient (case number: 11817) who lives in 29 Staunton Street, Central. He went to France on May 6 and returned to Hong Kong on May 9. He tested negative for COVID-19 on May 6 before departure. During hotel quarantine after he returned to Hong Kong, the patient developed fever on May 11 and was sent to Princess Margaret Hospital, where he tested positive. According to his epidemiological information, he is classified as an imported case from France. Yet, as a prudent measure, the building in Staunton Street where he had resided during part of the incubation period will be put under a Compulsory Testing Notice (CTN) today.

Following the announcement by the World Health Organization on the classification of the variant strain B.1.617 as the fourth Variant of Concern (VOC), after the three variants B.1.1.7, B.1.351 and P.1, the CHP will, with immediate effect, use L452R as the indicator of the new VOC, similar to the practice of using N501Y as the indicator for the other three VOCs. Cases positive with L452R will be managed with the same epidemiological control and prevention measures as those for cases positive with N501Y.

Subsequent to the announcement by the CHP on the updated quarantine arrangements of local COVID-19 cases with the N501Y mutant strain, the CHP reminded that persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases and had been released from the quarantine centres will be subject to compulsory testing on days 3, 7, 12 and 19 following the announcement of the relevant confirmed cases by the Department of Health. A CTN was issued on May 7 (www.gld.gov.hk/egazette/pdf/202125124e/egn202125124278.pdf). They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day.

Specified persons in relation to the following specified premises are reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the CTN tomorrow (May 14):

– 37-39 Fuk Wing Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon.

Members of the public can check the deadlines of compulsory testing for respective specified premises as stipulated in the aforementioned CTN on the Government's website (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

A total of 59 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (April 29 to May 12), including eight local cases of which one is from an unknown source.

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).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid testing according to the CTNs. The Regulation also requires all household members of close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test within a specified period according to CTNs published in the Gazette. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop and undergo testing as soon as possible.

The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk).

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 and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps). 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;
- 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.