

CHP provides latest information on cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 5) received notification from the National Health Commission (NHC) on the latest information of the cluster of pneumonia cases detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province. The public is again urged to maintain strict personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel.

According to information from the NHC, a total of 59 viral pneumonia cases with unknown cause were reported as at 8am today. No fatal cases have been recorded. All patients are receiving treatment in isolation.

Among the 59 cases, the earliest and most recent cases had onset of illness on December 12 and December 29 last year respectively. A total of 163 close contacts are under medical surveillance and none of them have developed abnormal symptoms such as fever. Contact tracing of close contacts is still ongoing. Epidemiological investigations revealed that some patients are business operators at a local seafood wholesale market in Wuhan. For the time being, the Mainland's investigation has not identified any evidence of definite human-to-human transmission and no healthcare workers have been infected. While the causative pathogen and cause of infection are still under investigation, respiratory pathogens including influenza viruses, avian influenza viruses, adenovirus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome have been ruled out.

According to the risk assessment of the World Health Organization, the reported link of this cluster of pneumonia of unknown aetiology to a wholesale fish and live animal market could indicate an exposure link to animals.

The CHP will continue to maintain close liaison with the NHC and closely monitor the latest development of cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan. In response to the cases, the Government yesterday (January 4) launched the Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance and activated the Serious Response Level with immediate effect. Under the Serious Response Level, the immediate health impact caused by Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance on local population is moderate.

A dedicated webpage (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html) has also been set up to provide relevant information and health advice. To address the public's concern, the CHP will announce the details of cases reported under enhanced surveillance (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/enhanced_sur_pneumonia_wuhan_eng.pdf) on the above webpage daily to enhance transparency.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the

public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes; after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretion after coughing or sneezing;
- 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 or hand dryer. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, 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.

The public should take heed of the health advice below when travelling outside Hong Kong:

- avoid touching animals (including game), poultry/birds or their droppings;
- avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms;
- avoid making close contact with patients, especially those with symptoms of acute respiratory infections;
- never consume game meat and patronise food premises where game meat is served;
- adhere to food safety and hygiene rules such as avoiding consuming raw or undercooked animal products, including milk, eggs and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or contaminated products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled;
- if feeling unwell when outside Hong Kong, especially if having a fever or cough, wear a surgical mask, inform the hotel staff or tour escort and seek medical advice at once; and
- after returning to Hong Kong, consult a doctor promptly if having a fever or other symptoms, inform the doctor of recent travel history and wear a surgical mask to help prevent spread of the disease.