

CHP reports investigation progress of case of influenza A (H9) infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 23) said that, regarding the human case of influenza A (H9) infection [announced earlier](#), the subtype of the virus infected by the 22-month-old girl was confirmed as H9N2 by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the CHP.

"According to the whole genome sequencing result, it is believed that the H9N2 virus isolated from sample of the patient are of avian origin. The relevant avian influenza virus showed no re-assortment with genes of human influenza origin. The CHP also found that the relevant H9N2 virus is sensitive to antiviral medicine Tamiflu." a spokesman for the CHP said.

The symptoms of the patient had subsided and is still undergoing isolation at Princess Margaret Hospital. She is now in stable condition. Also, the CHP earlier announced that one of her home contacts had presented with upper respiratory tract infection symptoms. Her nasopharyngeal aspirate sample tested negative against influenza A virus.

The CHP has already notified the health authority of the Mainland and the World Health Organization of the case. The CHP also uploaded the aforementioned genetic sequence result to the international genomic database GISAID. Epidemiological investigation of the case is ongoing.

Novel influenza A infection, including influenza A (H9), is a notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong. Influenza A (H9N2) infection is a mild form of avian influenza. Nine cases of influenza A (H9N2) had been reported since 1999. The recent case was an imported case reported in 2020. No deaths have been recorded so far.

A stringent surveillance mechanism by the CHP with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Suspected cases will be immediately referred to public hospitals for follow-up investigation.

"Travellers, especially those returning from avian influenza-affected areas and provinces with fever or respiratory symptoms, should immediately wear masks, seek medical attention and reveal their travel history to doctors. Healthcare professionals should pay special attention to patients who might have had contact with poultry, birds or their droppings in affected areas and provinces," the spokesman advised.

Members of the public should remain vigilant and take heed of the preventive advice against avian influenza below:

- Do not visit live poultry markets. Avoid contact with poultry, birds and

their droppings. If contact has been made, thoroughly wash hands with soap;

- Poultry and eggs should be thoroughly cooked before eating;
- Wash hands frequently with soap, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, handling food or eating; after going to the toilet or touching public installations or equipment (including escalator handrails, elevator control panels and door knobs); or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, hold the spit with a tissue and put it into a covered dustbin;
- Avoid crowded places and contact with fever patients;
- Wear masks when respiratory symptoms develop or when taking care of fever patients;
- Travellers if feeling unwell when outside Hong Kong, especially if having a fever or cough, should wear a surgical mask and inform the hotel staff or tour leader and seek medical advice at once; and
- Travellers returning from affected areas with avian influenza outbreaks should consult doctors promptly if they have flu-like symptoms, and inform the doctor of the travel history and wear a surgical mask to help prevent spread of the disease.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's avian influenza page (www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/24244.html) and website (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/global_statistics_avian_influenza_e.pdf) for more information on avian influenza-affected areas and provinces.