

CHP reports latest update on Mycobacterium abscessus infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has completed the epidemiological investigation of a Mycobacterium abscessus [infection cluster](#) (involving the premises under the name of Gals Glam Beauty) and a sporadic Mycobacterium abscessus [infection case](#) (involving a premises under the name of Geel Medical) and announced the latest update today (December 22).

Upon receiving reports on suspected Mycobacterium abscessus infection following injection services claiming to have slimming effects in early November, the CHP has set up an enquiry hotline for the cases and initiated investigation. According to the investigation findings, the Gals Glam Beauty cluster recorded a total of 19 cases (including 13 confirmed cases and six suspected cases). Among them, five cases were reported via doctors, eight cases were identified via epidemiological tracing and six cases were identified via a hotline. For the Geel Medical case, as no additional linked case was identified via epidemiological tracing and a hotline, the CHP has classified the case as a sporadic case. Over the past two weeks and more, the CHP has not received reports on additional Mycobacterium abscessus infection.

The CHP has set up an enquiry hotline (2125 2372) for the related infection cases. Since the operation of the hotline from November 3, a total of 29 calls were received, including the three confirmed and three suspected cases in relation to the Gals Glam Beauty cluster. The CHP has provided necessary information and arrangements for each individual enquiry, including providing health advice and referrals to hospital examinations. The enquiry hotline has not received related calls in more than two weeks and it ceased operation from 5.30pm today.

After reviewing the investigation findings on the Gals Glam Beauty cluster and the Geel Medical case, the CHP could not rule out the possibility that the incident may have been caused by environmental contamination due to lack of appropriate infection control measures implemented by the relevant persons during the course of injection. An investigation revealed that two of the persons responsible for the injection were registered doctors. The CHP has referred the information to the relevant statutory regulatory organisation for follow up. Furthermore, the Police have arrested five persons so far, including three persons for suspected illegal medical practices and two persons for suspected illegal possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products and Part 1 poisons. A criminal investigation is underway.

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. Mycobacterium abscessus can cause a variety of infections including those affecting skin and the soft tissues under the skin. Infected skin is usually red, warm and tender to the touch. Infected areas may also develop purulent or induration. Other signs of Mycobacterium abscessus infection are fever, chills, muscle aches, and a general feeling of illness.

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. They should understand the procedure, potential risks and complications before receiving injections for an informed decision. If symptoms develop, such as fever or feeling unwell, they should seek medical attention immediately.