

# DH appeals for heightened vigilance against respiratory tract infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (October 20) urged members of the public to heighten their vigilance against respiratory tract infection, including COVID-19, seasonal influenza and Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection, and stressed that vaccination can effectively prevent serious COVID-19 and influenza cases. The CHP also reminded persons who are symptomatic, even if having mild symptoms, to wear a surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly with a view to lowering the risk of high-risk persons being infected. Strict personal, hand and environmental hygiene should also be observed at all times.

The CHP has been closely monitoring the local situation of influenza and COVID-19. The overall local seasonal influenza activity has decreased recently, but remained above the epidemic seasonal threshold and may increase in the winter season.

While the COVID-19 activity remained stable, the CHP still recorded outbreaks in schools/institution and death cases. The CHP received a report of a COVID-19 death case last night (October 19) involving a 20-month-old boy with good past health. He developed fever, cough and runny nose, and tested positive for COVID-19 through a rapid antigen test on October 17. His fever persisted and he developed poor appetite on October 18. He was taken to the Accident and Emergency Department at United Christian Hospital (UCH) on the same day and was admitted to UCH's Paediatric Intensive Care Unit for management. His nasopharyngeal swab was positive for COVID-19 virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was COVID-19 infection complicated with acute necrotising encephalopathy, pneumonia, sepsis and shock. His condition deteriorated and passed away yesterday.

The CHP again reminded members of the public that as influenza viruses and the SARS-CoV-2 virus may both spread at the same time, getting influenza and COVID-19 vaccination is of vital importance in protecting the healthcare system from being overwhelmed. The CHP strongly urged members of the public, particularly children, the elderly and chronic disease patients, to receive vaccination as early as possible for effective protection against COVID-19 and influenza. Details of receiving both COVID-19 vaccination and seasonal influenza vaccination are available online ([www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106096.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106096.html)). Eligible persons can make reservation on the designated website ([booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk](http://booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk)).

Moreover, the CHP is aware of the Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection on the Mainland. The CHP has all along been collecting data from the laboratory and public hospitals to monitor the situation of Mycoplasma pneumoniae in Hong Kong. Historical data showed that cyclical high activity of Mycoplasma pneumoniae was recorded every few years, with the last period of high local activity occurring in 2016 and 2019. According to the latest local surveillance data, hospital admission attributed to Mycoplasma pneumoniae

infection has been increased since August this year, although it has not reached the peak level in 2016 and 2019. The CHP will issue letters to alert doctors, continue to monitor the developments and maintain communication with counterparts on the Mainland.

Mycoplasma is a common pathogen that spreads mainly through contact with droplets from the nose and throat of infected people especially when they cough and sneeze. The incubation period is about three weeks. Common symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat and malaise. Most of the patients with minor infection may recover on their own, while some patients may present with pneumonia. Although there is no vaccine against Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection currently, appropriate antibiotics are effective for treatment of patients.

"Wearing a surgical mask is important in preventing respiratory tract infections, including Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection. For persons with respiratory symptoms, even if the symptoms are mild, they should wear a surgical mask. Symptomatic patients should refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly with a view to lowering the risk of spreading the disease to high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised). They should perform hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask," the spokesman stressed.

The CHP also reminded members of the public to take the following measures to prevent respiratory tract infections:

- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the nose and mouth with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation; and
- Build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

For the latest information, please visit the [COVID-19 Thematic Website](#), the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#). As for vaccination, the public may visit the CHP's [Vaccination Schemes page](#). For Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection, please visit the CHP's [Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection page](#).