

# Grave sweepers urged to stagger grave-sweeping activities over wider period before and after Ching Ming Festival

With the approach of the Ching Ming Festival (April 4), a Government spokesman today (March 12) appealed to members of the public to stagger grave-sweeping activities over a wider period before and after the Ching Ming Festival to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This is in line with the recommendation of infectious diseases experts to avoid grave sweeping during the peak period on the day of the Ching Ming Festival so as to avoid overcrowding, which might increase the risk of disease transmission.

The spokesman also said that as clusters have been observed in the local community involving large meal gatherings and other gatherings, grave sweepers are reminded to avoid meal gatherings at worship sites or in crowded places. They are also urged to maintain appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible and good personal hygiene, as well as keep the environment clean when sweeping graves.

Related government departments are making the following appeals:

## 1. Environmental hygiene

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department appeals to members of the public to make use the Internet Memorial Service webpage ([www.memorial.gov.hk](http://www.memorial.gov.hk)) or the related mobile application to pay tribute to deceased loved ones.

The department will step up crowd management and control measures at the cemeteries and columbaria as well as remind grave sweepers to observe personal hygiene and take appropriate precautionary measures against the spread of the virus through public announcement system broadcasts and notices in venues.

The department will also strengthen disinfection of handrails and lift buttons inside cemeteries and columbaria. Grave sweepers are reminded to maintain social distance with others, avoid eating together at gravesites, keep the environment clean, and clear rubbish and stagnant water properly.

The Home Affairs Bureau said the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries will also adopt the above-mentioned crowd management and control measures in its cemeteries and columbaria to minimise the risk of disease transmission.

The bureau also called on religious groups to continue to maintain environmental hygiene at their religious sites and strengthen relevant

precautionary measures. Meanwhile, people are urged to avoid attending unnecessary crowded religious ceremonies, meetings and activities to minimise social contact so as to lower the risk of community transmission.

## 2. Special traffic arrangements

Special traffic and transport arrangements will be implemented in various districts from March to May to help members of the public to go grave sweeping before and after the Ching Ming Festival so as to spread out the crowds across the period. The Transport Department and public transport operators will closely monitor the situation and strengthen services according to passenger demand and traffic conditions so as to avoid crowding and long queuing times. Public transport operators will also enhance cleaning of vehicle compartments and station facilities.

The Police will implement and adjust road closures, traffic control and public transport diversions with regard to the actual situation in the areas. Members of the public are advised to follow the latest traffic news on television and radio.

## 3. Compulsory quarantine after visiting the Mainland for grave sweeping

Compulsory quarantine has been implemented and quarantine orders will be issued to all people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland. Except for those exempted, all people who have been to the Mainland in the past 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong (even if they enter Hong Kong via other places) are required to stay at designated places for a 14-day compulsory quarantine period. People who visit the Mainland to pay tribute to their ancestors are reminded that they will also be subject to the compulsory quarantine measure.

## 4. Personal hygiene

According to the preliminary epidemiological investigations by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, clusters involving large meal gatherings and other gatherings have been observed in the local community. Members of the public are urged to go out less and reduce social activities such as group gatherings, and to maintain appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible. They should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene, and take note of the following points:

- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if they have mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- 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 putting on a mask and after removing a mask;

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching one's 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;
- 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 a tissue when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues in 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.