

HA implements measures as Hong Kong enters winter influenza season

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Upon the announcement by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) today (January 2) that Hong Kong has entered the winter influenza season, the Hospital Authority (HA) made the following announcement:

As Hong Kong has entered the winter influenza season, the spokesperson of the HA said more stringent infection control measures will be enforced in public hospitals, including:

- All healthcare staff and visitors are required to put on surgical masks when entering the clinical areas and to enhance hand hygiene;
- Healthcare staff will assess patients according to the established clinical guidelines (i.e. fever, travel history, occupation, contact history and whether they were involved in a cluster of infection cases), and necessary infection control measures will be taken for patients with influenza symptoms;
- Virology services will be enhanced by providing polymerase chain reaction testing seven days a week in order to provide prompt clinical treatment and corresponding bed mobilisation arrangements; and
- The existing surveillance and report mechanism of severe influenza cases will be enhanced in collaboration with the CHP.

The spokesperson of the HA said that seasonal influenza vaccination is an effective and safe means to prevent influenza infection and its complications. Starting from October 2018, the HA has proactively arranged for healthcare staff to receive seasonal influenza vaccination to protect themselves and lower the risk of cross-infection. So far, around 30 000 staff members have received the vaccination, which is about a 40 per cent increase as compared to the figure for the same period last year. The HA appeals to members of the public who have not yet been vaccinated to get vaccinated promptly to prevent influenza infection and its complications.

The HA will continue to closely communicate with the CHP to monitor the influenza situation.