

Public urged to stay vigilant against dengue fever and other mosquito-borne diseases during holidays

With the approach of the National Day holiday, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 24) appealed to members of the public who intend to travel to stay alert to the situation of mosquito-borne diseases in their destinations. In view of the recent increase in dengue fever (DF) activity in neighbouring areas, the CHP specifically reminded members of the public to adopt necessary anti-mosquito precautions to guard against the disease when travelling abroad.

From September 1 to yesterday (September 23), the CHP recorded 12 imported DF cases; the patients had been to Guangdong Province (4), India (3), Nepal (2), the Philippines (2) and Malaysia (1) during the incubation period. The CHP has been closely monitoring the latest DF situation in neighbouring and overseas areas. DF is endemic in many tropical and subtropical areas of the world. The latest surveillance data showed that there was a significant increase in DF cases noted in some places in Asia compared to the same period last year. According to information from the Singapore Ministry of Health, a total of 11 847 DF cases have been recorded from January to September 14 this year, which is higher when compared to 6 755 cases recorded in the same period in 2023. In addition, Malaysia has recorded 98 442 cases from January to September 7 this year, which was a 19.3 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2023.

According to the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, the number of DF cases recorded in Guangdong Province in the past three months has been increasing, with 233 and 1 220 cases in July and August 2024 respectively. Most of the cases were locally acquired infection. Information from the Guangdong Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention further showed that more than 1 400 DF local cases have been recorded in September (as of September 15), with the highest numbers of cases recorded in Foshan, Guangzhou and Zhongshan.

According to the World Health Organization, the global incidence of DF has markedly increased over the past two decades, posing a substantial public health challenge. In 2023, ongoing transmissions, combined with an unexpected spike in DF cases, had resulted in close to a historic high of over 6.5 million cases, and more than 7 300 dengue-related deaths reported in over 80 countries/territories. Since the beginning of 2024, the Americas, including Brazil, Argentina and Peru, have recorded over 11 million cases, a record number. Detailed information on the latest DF situation in Hong Kong, as well as neighbouring and overseas countries and areas, has been uploaded to the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/df_imported_cases_and_overseas_figures_eng.pdf).

A spokesman for the CHP urged members of the public to stay vigilant and adopt appropriate anti-mosquito measures during their travel to prevent DF, as well as other mosquito-borne diseases including Japanese encephalitis, zika virus infection, malaria, etc.

The CHP spokesman reiterated that members of the public should follow stringent anti-mosquito measures when travelling. When travelling to areas where vector-borne diseases are common, they may consider to arrange travel health consultation with a doctor at least six weeks before the journey for risk assessment during which the need for any vaccinations, chemoprophylaxis and vector preventive measures will be determined.

The following measures on mosquito control could reduce the chance of acquiring mosquito-borne disease during travel:

- Wear loose, light-coloured, long-sleeved tops and trousers;
- Use DEET-containing insect repellent on exposed parts of the body and clothing. For details about the use of insect repellents and the key points to be observed, please refer to '[Tips for using insect repellents](#)'; and
- When engaging in outdoor activities, avoid using fragrant cosmetics or skin care products, re-apply insect repellents according to instructions, and apply insect repellents after sunscreen if both are used.

"Returned travellers should consult a doctor promptly if developing symptoms such as fever, respiratory symptoms, rash or painful swelling, and inform the doctor of their travel history for prompt diagnosis and treatment," the spokesman added.

The CHP will continue to monitor the local and overseas situation of infectious diseases and provide the latest information to members of the public in a timely manner for a better understanding of the development of infectious diseases and preparation on precautionary works. For more information, please refer to the CHP website on GAS infection (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/107780.html), DF (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/19.html) and travel health service (www.travelhealth.gov.hk).