

Suspected Ebola virus disease reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (October 4) received notification of a suspected case of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in which the patient's blood specimen preliminarily tested negative for Ebola virus.

The female patient, aged 54 with good past health, presented with headache, dizziness, fever, vomiting and diarrhoea yesterday (October 3). She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Princess Margaret Hospital for medical advice on the same day and was admitted for isolation and management. The patient currently is in a stable condition.

"Upon notification, we immediately commenced epidemiological investigation and the patient's blood specimen was obtained for laboratory testing. Her blood specimen was negative for Ebola virus upon laboratory testing. In accordance with the guideline of the World Health Organization (WHO), a repeat blood test would be conducted for the patient two days later to rule out EVD," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had travelled to Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from May 27 to September 14, 2019, during which she had no contact with sick persons, nor had she visited health-care facilities and affected provinces. Her travel collateral and home contacts have remained asymptomatic thus far.

"In Hong Kong, the Preparedness and Response Plan for EVD (EVD Plan) sets out the Government's preparedness and response plan in case of an outbreak of EVD. A three-tier response level is adopted in the plan. Three response levels, namely Alert, Serious and Emergency, are based on the risk assessment of the EVD that may affect Hong Kong and its health impact on the community," the spokesman said.

"The Government announced in July this year the activation of the Alert Response Level in accordance with the EVD Plan following the WHO's declaration of the EVD outbreak in the DRC as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern," the spokesman added.

The CHP will continue to closely monitor the latest developments overseas and communicate with the WHO, as well as the Mainland and neighbouring health authorities to exchange information and updates on preventive and control measures, and will modify the local response and health surveillance if necessary.

"Viral haemorrhagic fever (including EVD) has been a notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong since July 2008. Suspected or confirmed cases of EVD must be promptly reported to the CHP for investigation, control and surveillance. Locally, there has been no confirmed EVD case to date," the spokesman explained.

Prevention and control measures against EVD have been put in place locally, including:

- Temperature screening for inbound travellers has been in place at all boundary control points. Suspected cases of EVD will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for the Ebola virus;
- Strengthened surveillance of patients with EVD symptoms who have a travel history to the DRC within 21 days before onset; and
- Publicity and health education on EVD are strengthened at all boundary control points.

There is currently no registered vaccine for EVD in Hong Kong. The public should avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas, and observe good personal and environmental hygiene during travel:

- Always use liquid soap or alcohol-based hand rub to clean hands before touching the eyes, nose and mouth;
- Avoid close contact with feverish or sick patients, and contact with blood or body fluids of patients, including items which may have come into contact with patients' blood or body fluids;
- Avoid contact with animals; and
- Cook food thoroughly before consumption.

The public may visit the pages below for more disease information and travel advice:

- The CHP's EVD page (www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/34199.html);
- The DH's Travel Health Service's travel health news (www.travelhealth.gov.hk/english/outbreaknews/outbreaknews.html); and
- The WHO's EVD page (www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/ebola/en/).