

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 6) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza. The 2023/24 seasonal influenza vaccination programmes [have started](#) and the CHP appealed to members of the public to receive free seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) to better protect themselves in the coming influenza season.

The case involves a 13-month-old girl with good past health. She developed fever, cough and runny nose on December 28 last year. She sought medical attention at the out-patient department of a private hospital on the next day (December 29), during which she presented with convulsion and was brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH). She was admitted on the same day and was later discharged against medical advice on December 30. On January 1, she developed convulsion again and was brought to Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical Centre where she was admitted. Due to worsening symptoms, she was transferred to Paediatric Intensive Care Unit of PWH for management on January 2. Her respiratory specimen was positive for influenza A (H3) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with encephalitis. She is now in stable condition.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that the patient had not received SIV for this season and had no travel history during the incubation period. One of her home contacts is currently symptomatic. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. SIV is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as reducing influenza-related hospitalisation and death. SIV is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive SIV early. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the [CHP's website](#)."

A person who gets influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. It is important to receive both SIV and COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible, in particular for children and elderly persons residing in the community or residential care homes. The public should also maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- For high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised), wear a surgical mask when visiting public places. The public should also 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 wearing and after removing a mask;
- 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 mouth and nose 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;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, perform physical activity regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

The public may visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) for more information.

Health risk category for Air Quality Health Index may reach "Serious" level

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recorded higher than normal air pollution levels in some areas since today's afternoon (Jan 6). According to the EPD's forecast, it is expected that the health risk category of Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) at some air quality monitoring stations may reach the "Serious" level later today.

The weather in Hong Kong today is mainly fine and the visibility is low. Winds weaken slightly over the coast of Guangdong today, which is unfavorable to pollutant dispersion. The intense sunshine enhances photochemical smog activity leading to rapid formation of ozone and fine particulates in the Pearl River Delta region.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, a fresh to strong replenishment of the monsoon will reach the coast of southern China on tomorrow morning. The EPD expects air quality in Hong Kong will improve by then.

With a health risk category in the "Very High" range or above, children, the elderly and persons with existing heart or respiratory illnesses are advised to reduce physical exertion and outdoor activities to a minimum or avoid such activities. The general public is advised to reduce, or reduce to a minimum, outdoor physical exertion, and to reduce time outdoors, especially in areas with heavy traffic. As health effects of air pollutants may vary for individuals, persons who are in doubt or experience discomfort should seek advice from healthcare professionals. The public may visit the Centre for Health Protection's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/460/3557.html) for more information on health effects of air pollution and relevant health advice.

The Education Bureau (EDB) urges all schools to visit the EDB website for appropriate measures to safeguard students' health and take note of changes in the index. The relevant hyperlink is as follows:
www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-activities/sch-activities-guidelines/index.html;

When the AQHI is at the "Very High" level, employers of outdoor workers performing heavy manual work are advised to assess the risk of outdoor work and take appropriate preventive measures to protect the health of their employees, such as reducing outdoor physical exertion and the time of their stay outdoors, especially in areas with heavy traffic. At the "Serious" level, employers of all outdoor workers are advised to assess the risk of outdoor work and take appropriate preventive measures to protect the health of their employees.

Members of the public can check the current AQHI readings at the EPD's website (www.aqhi.gov.hk/en.html) or by calling the hotline 2827 8541.

[Transcript of remarks by SHYA at media session](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, at a media session after attending a radio programme today (January 6):

Reporter: Some District Councils have been proposing measures such as night markets, check-in spots. How much would these help the local economy and also how would you respond to scholars comments that these ideas are somewhat similar and would lead to an overlap of resources?

Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs: When you visit the community, what we always listen and get views from residents are that they want more activities

and district-based events to be held in the community. They want to see a vibrant and energetic community. I think this is also a way to enhance the sense of belongings of our residents in the community. That is why the seventh term District Councils in their first meetings, they have proposed different ideas in organising various district-based activities in different districts. They are aiming to provide chances and opportunities for our residents to gather together to enjoy the festive atmosphere and boost up district-based economy. I think this will definitely help stimulate consumption in the district and help the business in the community.

Some may say that the nature of the activities are somewhat similar, but when you look into the list of activities, some are already well-established ones or have a long history of organising such activities in the community, like the traditional dragon dances during the Tin Hau festival or some traditional ceremonies during traditional festivals. The aim of the District Councils in organising these activities is to enhance publicity and to organise such activities in a more systematic and well established way, so that the community will learn about the already well-organised activities in various districts. As you can see from the list, some activities fall into the period of some traditional festive activities' timing, and they are quite similar, but this will not hinder the participation from the community, rather, we can provide more chances and information about all these activities for our residents from different districts to choose a more convenient place or a more well-organised place to go. We are providing more choices for our residents and these activities themselves are not mutually exclusive. We are not saying that when some districts have already organised an activity or event, the other districts could not organise similar ones. We want to have an inclusive list and provide more alternatives and activities for our residents to enjoy during various festivals.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

CE officiates at Second Phase Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok Launching Ceremony

â€‹The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (January 6) officiated at the Second Phase Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok Launching Ceremony. Mr Lee visited special attractions in Sha Tau Kok and kicked off a dragon boat performance, adding impetus to the opening-up of Sha Tau Kok.

Noting at the launching ceremony that the Second Phase Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok is a milestone in the long-term development of the district, he said that the Government and the Sha Tau Kok Rural Committee identified together

the most distinguished characteristics of Sha Tau Kok and created the "top 10 attractions", "top 10 delicacies" and "top 10 cultural attractions", which have drawn many tourists since the opening-up on January 1 this year. He said that from conception, implementation to promotion of the new positioning, the attractions and facilities of Sha Tau Kok are the result of the collaborative endeavor across government bureaux and departments, the district and the industry.

After the launching ceremony, Mr Lee, accompanied by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, visited the old Sha Tau Kok Fire Station, which still retains its former appearance, and unveiled a century-old fire-fighting hand cart. Mr Lee also visited the Sha Tak Kok Post Office and bought postcards featuring the winning entries of a Sha Tau Kok photo competition. He stamped a postcard with the unique cachets designed by the Security Bureau (SB) and mailed it to colleagues in the SB to thank them for their efforts in promoting the opening-up.

Mr Lee later visited the "Dried Seafood Street" located inside the Sha Tau Kok Market and chatted with a stall operator who sells Sha Tau Kok local specialties such as dried seafood, rice crackers and cha kwo (steamed sticky rice dumpling) to learn more about the stall's business. Mr Lee also visited the Fish Lantern Square which displays scenes of the national intangible cultural heritage "Sha Tau Kok fish-lantern dance" and chatted with residents. He was briefed by Mr Tang on the implementation of the current phase of the opening-up and the new facilities.

Next, Mr Lee arrived at the Sha Tau Kok Pier to kick off a dragon boat performance. He was greeted by the beating of drums from four dragon boat teams formed by the Hong Kong Police Force, the Immigration Department, the Customs and Excise Department and the Fire Services Department, as well as four dragon boat teams formed by residents of Sha Tau Kok. Mr Lee sounded the horn to mark the opening of the dragon boat performance in which the eight teams rowed together to the finish line, signifying the joint efforts in promoting the opening-up of Sha Tau Kok.

The daily tourist quota under the Second Phase Opening-up of Sha Tau Kok includes 700 tour group visitors and 300 individual tourists. Tourists can visit all parts of Sha Tau Kok, except Chung Ying Street, from 7am to 9pm. Individual visitors can apply for a free electronic Tourism Closed Area Permit by logging onto the Hong Kong Police Force Online Applications Platform (www.es.police.gov.hk). The application process takes three working days. Tourists may also contact licensed travel agents directly to sign up for tours visiting Sha Tau Kok.

Individual tourists are required to take public transport to Sha Tau Kok. Access by private vehicles is not allowed. Tourists may take the following transport options:

(1) Bus route Nos. 78S (express) or 78K at MTR Sheung Shui Station or Fanling Station;

(2) Minibus route No. 55K at MTR Sheung Shui Station and get off at the terminal; or

(3) Bus route No. 277A at MTR Lam Tin Station.

Please download the SB mobile application "Safeguard HK" to explore the "top 10 attractions", "top 10 delicacies" and "top 10 cultural attractions" of Sha Tau Kok. Tourists can participate in a limited-time stamp collection game to redeem a free gift via the mobile application on a first-come, first-served basis while stocks last. The Hong Kong Tourism Board has also launched a thematic website offering information of the opening-up of Sha Tau Kok.

Other officiating guests at the launching ceremony included Mr Tang; the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung; the Chairman of the New Territories Heung Yee Kuk, Mr Kenneth Lau; Legislative Council Member Mr Yiu Pak-leung; the Commissioner for Tourism, Ms Vivian Sum; the Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Pang Yiu-kai; the Chairman of Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, Mrs Gianna Hsu; and the Chairman of the Sha Tau Kok District Rural Committee, Mr Lee Koon-hung.

[CHP investigates case of invasive meningococcal infection](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 6) investigating a case of invasive meningococcal infection, a communicable disease transmitted by direct contact with droplets from carriers or infected persons.

The case involves a 37-year-old male with good past health, who was admitted to a correctional institution in Southern District since early December last year. The patient was clinically stable until January 3 this year. He started to have signs of mental confusion and was immediately sent to the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Mary Hospital on January 4. Later, the patient developed fever and was transferred to the intensive care unit for further treatment. His clinical diagnosis was meningitis. His cerebrospinal fluid sample tested positive for *Neisseria meningitidis* upon laboratory testing.

The CHP is carrying out its epidemiological investigations and has arranged chemoprophylaxis for all close contacts, who have remained asymptomatic so far. The institution has also followed the advice by the CHP to immediately disinfect relevant environment. Investigation is continuing.

"Meningococcal infection is caused by a bacterium known as meningococcus. It is mainly transmitted by direct contact through respiratory secretions, including droplets from the nose and throat, from infected persons. The incubation period varies from two to 10 days, and is commonly three or four days," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The clinical pictures among the infected may vary. Severe illness may result when the bacteria invade the bloodstream (meningococcaemia) or the membranes that envelop the brain and spinal cord (meningococcal meningitis).

Meningococcaemia is characterised by a sudden onset of fever, intense headache, purpura, shock and even death in severe cases. Meningococcal meningitis is characterised by high fever, severe headache and a stiff neck followed by drowsiness, vomiting, fear of bright light, or a rash. It can cause brain damage or even death. The brain damage may lead to intellectual impairment, mental retardation, hearing loss and electrolyte imbalance. Invasive meningococcal infection can be complicated by arthritis, inflammation of the heart muscle, inflammation of the posterior chamber of the eye or chest infection.

Meningococcal infection is a serious illness. Patients should be treated promptly with antibiotics.

To prevent meningococcal infection, members of the public are advised to take heed of the following measures:

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly, especially when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, e.g. after sneezing, and clean hands with alcohol-based handrub when they are not visibly soiled;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, hold the spit with a tissue, dispose of nasal and mouth discharge in a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands immediately;
- Avoid crowded places;
- Avoid close contact with patients who have a fever or severe headache;
- Travellers to high-risk areas may consult doctors for meningococcal vaccination; and
- Travellers returning from high-risk areas should seek medical advice if they become ill, and should discuss their recent travel history with their doctor.

The public may visit the CHP's [website](#) for more information on meningococcal infection.