

CHP reports latest update on Mycobacterium abscessus infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has completed the epidemiological investigation of a Mycobacterium abscessus [infection cluster](#) (involving the premises under the name of Gals Glam Beauty) and a sporadic Mycobacterium abscessus [infection case](#) (involving a premises under the name of Geel Medical) and announced the latest update today (December 22).

Upon receiving reports on suspected Mycobacterium abscessus infection following injection services claiming to have slimming effects in early November, the CHP has set up an enquiry hotline for the cases and initiated investigation. According to the investigation findings, the Gals Glam Beauty cluster recorded a total of 19 cases (including 13 confirmed cases and six suspected cases). Among them, five cases were reported via doctors, eight cases were identified via epidemiological tracing and six cases were identified via a hotline. For the Geel Medical case, as no additional linked case was identified via epidemiological tracing and a hotline, the CHP has classified the case as a sporadic case. Over the past two weeks and more, the CHP has not received reports on additional Mycobacterium abscessus infection.

The CHP has set up an enquiry hotline (2125 2372) for the related infection cases. Since the operation of the hotline from November 3, a total of 29 calls were received, including the three confirmed and three suspected cases in relation to the Gals Glam Beauty cluster. The CHP has provided necessary information and arrangements for each individual enquiry, including providing health advice and referrals to hospital examinations. The enquiry hotline has not received related calls in more than two weeks and it ceased operation from 5.30pm today.

After reviewing the investigation findings on the Gals Glam Beauty cluster and the Geel Medical case, the CHP could not rule out the possibility that the incident may have been caused by environmental contamination due to lack of appropriate infection control measures implemented by the relevant persons during the course of injection. An investigation revealed that two of the persons responsible for the injection were registered doctors. The CHP has referred the information to the relevant statutory regulatory organisation for follow up. Furthermore, the Police have arrested five persons so far, including three persons for suspected illegal medical practices and two persons for suspected illegal possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products and Part 1 poisons. A criminal investigation is underway.

Mycobacterium abscessus is found in water, soil, and dust. It has been known to contaminate medications and medical devices. Infection with Mycobacterium abscessus is usually caused by injections of substances contaminated with the bacterium or through invasive medical procedures

employing contaminated equipment or material. Mycobacterium abscessus can cause a variety of infections including those affecting skin and the soft tissues under the skin. Infected skin is usually red, warm and tender to the touch. Infected areas may also develop purulent or induration. Other signs of Mycobacterium abscessus infection are fever, chills, muscle aches, and a general feeling of illness.

The DH reminded members of the public that injection procedures should only be performed by a locally registered doctor. Customers should look for his or her full name against the [list of registered doctors](#) of the Medical Council of Hong Kong as well as his or her professional qualifications and relevant experience. They should understand the procedure, potential risks and complications before receiving injections for an informed decision. If symptoms develop, such as fever or feeling unwell, they should seek medical attention immediately.

Hospital Authority reminds members of public to stay alert to fraudulent calls

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

â€‹The spokesperson of the Hospital Authority (HA) today (December 22) reminds members of the public to stay alert to fraudulent calls.

The HA received a report from Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH) today that several hospital staff members have received phone calls at their office extensions, in the form of pre-recorded messages and claiming to be calling from PWH. The calls requested recipients to follow instructions to collect a document, which are similar to the fraudulent calls received by members of the public earlier. PWH has reported the incident to the Police and has reminded staff members through the hospital's internal communication channels to stay vigilant about fraudulent calls.

The HA reiterates that hospital staff will contact patients personally by phone and provide relevant information to verify the identity of both parties. Public members are advised not to disclose personal information during any unidentified phone calls and to report any suspected fraudulent calls to the Police.

Eurasian wigeon carcass tests positive for H5 virus

A carcass of a Eurasian wigeon found in the Hong Kong Wetland Park (Wetland Park) in Tin Shui Wai was suspected to be positive for the H5 avian influenza (AI) virus based on preliminary testing, a spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (December 22). Further confirmatory tests are being conducted.

The bird carcass was collected earlier at the mudflat in the Wetland Park. The Eurasian wigeon is a winter visitor mainly found in the Deep Bay area.

The spokesman said cleaning and disinfection has been stepped up at the location where the dead bird was found in the Wetland Park. Notices have also been put up to remind visitors to pay attention to personal hygiene. The Wetland Park will keep a close watch on the situation of birds inside the Park.

One chicken farm is within 3 kilometres of where the dead bird was found. The AFCD immediately informed the chicken farm concerned and no abnormal mortality or symptoms of avian influenza among the chicken flocks have been found so far. The AFCD will remind poultry farmers to strengthen precautionary and biosecurity measures against AI. Pet bird shop owners and licence holders of bird exhibitions will also be reminded to implement proper precautions against AI.

The spokesman said that the department will closely monitor poultry farms and the wholesale market to ensure that proper precautions against AI have been taken. The department will continue its wild-bird monitoring and surveillance.

"People should avoid personal contact with wild birds and live poultry and their droppings. They should clean their hands thoroughly after coming into contact with them. The public can call 1823 for the AFCD's follow-up if they come across birds suspected to be sick or dead, including the carcasses of wild birds and poultry," the spokesman said.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will continue to be vigilant over live poultry stalls. It will also remind stall operators to maintain good hygiene.

The Department of Health will keep up its health education to remind the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene to prevent AI.

The AFCD, the FEHD, the Customs and Excise Department and the Police will strive to deter the illegal importation of poultry and birds into Hong Kong to minimise the risk of AI outbreaks caused by imported poultry and

birds that have not gone through inspection and quarantine.

All relevant government departments will continue to be highly vigilant and strictly enforce preventive measures against AI. Health advice about preventing AI is available on the "Avian Influenza Health Advice" page at www.afcd.gov.hk.

Update on cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci cases in Princess Margaret Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) carrier cases, the spokesperson for Princess Margaret Hospital gave the following update today (December 22):

Following a contact tracing investigation, one more patient in the orthopaedic ward, a 23-year-old male, was identified as a carrier of VRE while not having signs of infection. The patient is now being treated in isolation and is in stable condition.

The ward concerned has adopted the following enhanced infection control measures:

1. Enhanced hand hygiene and stringent contact precautions;
2. Enhanced attention to contamination-prone procedures; and
3. Enhanced disinfection and cleaning of the ward concerned.

The hospital will continue the enhanced infection control measures and closely monitor the situation of the ward concerned. The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health for necessary follow-up.

Special traffic and transport arrangements for Christmas Eve and

Christmas Day

The Transport Department (TD) today (December 22) reminded the public that the following special traffic and transport arrangements will be implemented on December 24 and 25 to facilitate the celebrations on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Road closures

- Road closures and traffic diversions will be implemented in the vicinities of Lan Kwai Fong in Central, Tsim Sha Tsui and the West Kowloon Cultural District in phases from 2pm on December 24. The Tsim Sha Tsui East (Mody Road) Bus Terminus and China Ferry Terminal Bus Terminus will be suspended from 6pm on that day while the Star Ferry Bus Terminus in Tsim Sha Tsui will also be suspended from 6.30pm until the reopening of closed roads for traffic. To facilitate the road closure arrangements, the bus and green minibus (GMB) routes operating in the affected areas will be subject to diversions or suspensions, and the associated bus and GMB stops located within the affected areas will be suspended or relocated accordingly.

Adjustments on public transport services on December 24

- The services of MTR lines including Island Line, South Island Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Kwun Tong Line, East Rail Line and Tung Chung Line will be strengthened gradually from 7am;
- MTR lines (except Airport Express, Disneyland Resort Line and section of East Rail Line between Sheung Shui – Lok Ma Chau/Lo Wu), and Light Rail route Nos. 505, 507, 610, 614P, 615P, 706 and 751 will provide overnight services;
- The operating hours of MTR bus route Nos. 506, K51 and K54 will be extended;
- KMB special bus route no. N64P will be operated at 0.40am and 1.10am of the following day. The services and operating hours of various bus routes in Kowloon and the New Territories (including 20 KMB routes and two Citybus routes) will be strengthened or extended respectively;
- The operating hours of seven GMB routes in Kowloon and one GMB route in the New Territories will be extended;
- Tram services will be extended to 1.15am the following day and will also be strengthened subject to passenger demand; and
- The operating hours of the Star Ferry (Central – Tsim Sha Tsui) will be extended to 1am the following day.

Central to Mid-Levels Escalator and Walkway System Services

- The operating hours of the Central to Mid-Levels Escalator and Walkway System on December 24 and 25 will be extended to 1am the following day.

For details of the special traffic and public transport arrangements, members of the public may visit the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk) or mobile application "HKeMobility". Passengers may also refer to the passenger notices displayed by the relevant public transport operators.

Members of the public are advised to make use of public transport services as far as possible to avoid traffic congestion and unnecessary delays. The TD and the Police will closely monitor the traffic situation and implement appropriate measures when necessary. The Police may adjust the traffic arrangements, subject to the prevailing crowd and traffic conditions in the areas. The public should pay attention to the latest traffic news through radio, television or "HKeMobility".