

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 13) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From May 5 to 11, the CHP recorded one community-acquired LD case, involving a male patient, aged 63 with good past health, who lives in Sai Kung District.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of May 11, 31 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

â€‹The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Latest situation of Shek O Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (May 13) that the red tide off Shek O Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island, has dissipated and the water quality of the beach is suitable for swimming.

However, due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at the beach. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

[Swap Connect enhancements to advance high-quality opening-up of China's financial markets](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

To implement the national strategy to steadily advance the opening-up of China's financial markets, the mutual access between the Mainland and Hong Kong interest rate swap markets (Swap Connect) was launched on May 15, 2023. Since the launch, the trading and clearing arrangements of Swap Connect have been operating smoothly and its trading volume has been on the rise with active participation of Mainland and overseas investors. As of the end of April 2024, 20 Mainland dealers and 58 overseas investors had conducted more than 3 600 interest rate swap transactions with an aggregate notional amount of approximately RMB1.77 trillion, representing an average daily turnover of RMB7.6 billion or thereabouts in notional amount. The average daily turnover calculated on a monthly basis had increased by around three times from approximately RMB3 billion in the first month after the launch to over RMB12 billion in April 2024, providing Mainland and overseas investors with a convenient and efficient risk management tool to manage their RMB asset allocation.

To further promote the co-ordinated development of financial derivatives markets in the Mainland and Hong Kong and establish a framework to facilitate high-quality opening-up in the realm of finance, the People's Bank of China, the Securities and Futures Commission and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority have resolved to support the following further enhancements of Swap Connect, after thoroughly reviewing the operational experiences of Swap Connect and carefully considering comments and suggestions from Mainland and overseas investors. First, to enrich the product types, interest rate swap contracts with payment cycles based on the International Monetary Market dates will be accepted for clearing to align with mainstream products traded globally and meet the diverse risk management needs of Mainland and overseas investors. Second, to improve the ancillary services, compression service and the clearing of backdated swap contracts as the associated supporting arrangement will be introduced to facilitate participating institutions to manage the notional amount outstanding, lower capital costs, and foster active trading.

In addition, the China Foreign Exchange Trade System (National Interbank Funding Center), the Shanghai Clearing House, and OTC Clearing Hong Kong Limited will roll out other system enhancements and incentive programmes simultaneously to reduce the participation costs of Mainland and overseas investors.

For the next step, the Mainland and Hong Kong regulators will guide the financial market infrastructure institutions in both markets to extend the business collaboration under Swap Connect in a steady and orderly manner and further enhance the operational arrangements of the scheme, with a view to facilitating the steady opening-up of China's financial markets and strengthening Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre.

Import of poultry meat and products from Dodge County of State of Minnesota in US suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 13) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Dodge County of the State of Minnesota in the United States (US), the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the area with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 16 480 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 7.73 million poultry eggs from the US in the first three months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the American authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Update on cluster of Influenza A cases

at Shatin Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients infected with Influenza A in a medical and geriatrics ward, the spokesperson for Shatin Hospital gave the following update today (May 13):

One more patient in the ward, a 78-year-old female, presented with respiratory symptoms. Appropriate viral tests were arranged for the patient and the test result was positive for Influenza A. The patient concerned is being treated in isolation and is in stable condition.

Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the concerned ward are under close surveillance.

The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.