

# Update on dengue fever

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (April 5) reported the latest number of dengue fever (DF) cases, and urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From March 29 to yesterday (April 4), the CHP recorded two imported DF cases. The patients had been to Malaysia and Indonesia respectively during the incubation period.

As of yesterday, 12 imported cases of DF had been recorded in 2024. In 2023, 62 imported cases of DF were recorded.

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. Since the beginning of 2023, ongoing transmission, combined with an unexpected spike in DF cases, has resulted in close to a historic high of over 5 million cases and more than 5 000 dengue-related deaths reported in over 80 countries/territories. Several countries in Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh and Thailand, have reported a notable surge in dengue cases in 2023 compared to previous years, whereas the most affected countries in the Western Pacific region are the Philippines and Vietnam. As of March 25, 2024, the Americas, including Brazil, Argentina and Peru, have recorded over 3 million cases, reaching a record number of cases. As such, members of the public, while travelling abroad, should stay vigilant and carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures. 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](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/df_imported_cases_and_overseas_figures_eng.pdf)).

"Apart from general measures, travellers returning from areas affected by DF should apply insect repellent for 14 days upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and drains to prevent blockage;
- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;
- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;
- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing light-coloured long-

sleeved clothes and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or uncovered areas of the body when doing outdoor activities.

DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;
- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children\*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Re-apply only when needed and follow the instructions.

\* For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

The public should call 1823 in case of mosquito problems and may visit the following pages for more information: the DF page of the [CHP](#) and the [Travel Health Service](#), the latest [Travel Health News](#), [tips for using insect repellents](#), and the CHP [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#)

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## **Income and asset limits of Working Family Allowance Scheme to be raised**

The Government announced today (April 5) that the income and asset limits of the Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme for the claim months starting from April 2024 will be raised (details at Annex).

The WFA Scheme aims to support lower-income working families which are not on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and have longer working hours. The Scheme rewards hard work, with the amount of allowance assessed on a monthly basis according to the household's income and working hours. Each eligible child will also be provided with Child Allowance.

Under the WFA Scheme, the claim period of an application covers the six calendar months immediately before the submission of the application. An eligible household is required to submit an application for every claim period. The raised income and asset limits will be applicable to the claim months from April 2024 to March 2025.

For enquiries, applicants may visit the website ([www.wfsfaa.gov.hk](http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk)) or call the 24-hour hotline (2558 3000) of the Working Family Allowance Office

of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency.

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## Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on April 3 to noon today (April 5), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 141 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category, in the past two days. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

([www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme\\_rafs/programme\\_rafs\\_fc\\_01\\_30\\_Nuclear\\_Event\\_and\\_Food\\_Safety.html](http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html)).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 100 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website ([www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological\\_testing/Radiological\\_Test.html](http://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html)).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website ([www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html](http://www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html)).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 40 429 samples of food imported from Japan (including 26 821 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 11 130 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

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## **Correctional officers stop person in custody attacking staff member**

â€‹Correctional officers at Sha Tsui Correctional Institution stopped a male person in custody attacking a staff member today (April 5).

At 7.56am today, a 19-year-old male person in custody suddenly became emotional and attacked a correctional officer inside the institution hospital. Officers at the scene immediately stopped the assailant and applied OC foam to subdue him after repeated warnings were ignored.

During the incident, the officer sustained injury to his face and mouth. After examination and treatment by the Medical Officer at the institution hospital, he was referred to a public hospital for further treatment. The assailant sustained injury to his face. He did not need to be sent to a public hospital after examination and treatment by the institution Medical Officer.

The case has been reported to the Police for investigation.

The assailant was sentenced to undergo training at the institution for the offence of without reasonable excuse failing to return to the rehabilitation centre concerned at or before the expiration of the period for which permission has been granted in January 2024.

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## **Grading of beach water quality released**

â€‹The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (April 5) released the latest grading of water quality for 39 gazetted beaches (see Note 1) and one non-gazetted beach (see Note 2).

Thirty-three beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1), six as Fair (Grade 2) and one as Poor (Grade 3).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Big Wave Bay Beach*	Lo So Shing Beach
Butterfly Beach*	Lower Cheung Sha Beach
Cafeteria New Beach	Ma Wan Tung Wan Beach*
Cafeteria Old Beach	Middle Bay Beach
Cheung Chau Tung Wan Beach*	Pui O Beach*
Chung Hom Kok Beach	Repulse Bay Beach*
Clear Water Bay First Beach	Shek O Beach*
Clear Water Bay Second Beach*	Silver Mine Bay Beach*
Deep Water Bay Beach*	South Bay Beach*
Discovery Bay Tai Pak Beach	St. Stephen's Beach
Golden Beach*	Stanley Main Beach*
Hap Mun Bay Beach*	Tai Po Lung Mei Beach*
Hung Shing Yeh Beach*	Tong Fuk Beach
Kadoorie Beach*	Trio Beach
Kiu Tsui Beach	Turtle Cove Beach
Kwun Yam Beach	Upper Cheung Sha Beach
Lido Beach*	

Grade 2 beaches are:

Approach Beach	Hoi Mei Wan Beach
Casam Beach*	Silverstrand Beach*
Castle Peak Beach	Ting Kau Beach*

Grade 3 beach is:

Anglers' Beach\*

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades, namely Good (Grade 1), Fair (Grade 2), Poor (Grade 3) and Very Poor (Grade 4), according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a tropical cyclone or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the

EPD's website on Beach Water Quality ([www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach](http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach)) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666. Members of the public can also obtain the latest daily water quality forecast information for all beaches that are open for swimming through the Beach Water Quality Forecast mobile application (available for download from: [www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQApp](http://www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQApp)) or the dedicated beach water quality forecast page ([www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast](http://www.epd.gov.hk/en/BWQForecast)) on the EPD's beach thematic website.

Note 1: Lifesaving services are provided by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department at 22 gazetted beaches, marked with an asterisk (\*) above, from April 1. Due to the damage caused to the footpaths leading to Chung Hom Kok Beach by landslides, the beach is temporarily closed until further notice. For details, please refer to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's Special Announcement ([www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/beach/index.html](http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/beach/index.html)).

Note 2: This refers to the non-gazetted beach in Discovery Bay which has no lifesaving service.