

# CHP investigates two imported cases of measles infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (March 22) investigating two imported cases of measles infection and reminded the public that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles, and people born outside Hong Kong who might not have received a measles vaccination during childhood should review their vaccination history.

The first case involves a 30-year-old man with good past health. He developed fever, rash and conjunctivitis since March 16. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Mary Hospital on March 19 and was admitted for treatment. His blood sample tested positive for immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibodies to measles virus upon laboratory testing. He is in stable condition. An epidemiological investigation revealed that the patient was born outside Hong Kong and did not receive measles vaccinations in his home country before. His household contact remained asymptomatic. According to the patient, he travelled to Indonesia from March 3 to 9 during the incubation period and did not have contact with measles patients in Hong Kong. The case has been identified as an imported case. The patient had also travelled to Thailand during the communicable period. He departed Hong Kong for Bangkok, Thailand, by flight FD501 on March 15 and returned to Hong Kong from Bangkok, Thailand, by flight FD504 on March 17.

The second case involves a 27-month-old girl with good past health. She developed fever and cough since March 16 and rash since March 19. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Tuen Mun Hospital on March 20 and was admitted for treatment the same day. Her respiratory specimen sample tested positive for the measles virus upon nucleic acid testing. She is in stable condition. An epidemiological investigation revealed that the patient did not receive measles vaccinations. Her household contacts remained asymptomatic. According to the family of the patient, she was in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates during the whole incubation period. The patient returned to Hong Kong on March 15 from Dubai by flight EK380. The case has been identified as an imported case.

As measles is highly infectious and the transmission risk at crowded environment (such as transportation) is higher, the CHP has set up an enquiry hotline (2125 2371) for contact tracing of the two cases and appealed to the passengers of the above-mentioned flights with symptoms of measles to call the hotline. Officers of the CHP will assess their conditions and offer suggestions. The hotline will operate from 9am to 1pm tomorrow (March 23) and on March 24, and from 9am to 5.30pm starting from March 25, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

Investigations are ongoing.

"The global immunisation coverage rates have dropped since the COVID-19 pandemic. Many countries worldwide are facing a resurgence of measles

outbreaks. According to the World Health Organization, the number of measles cases had risen worldwide to over 300 000 cases reported in 2023, a roughly 80 per cent increase from 2022. The Western Pacific region recorded a total of about 5 000 cases in 2023, which represented more than a 2.5 times increase when compared with 2022, with persistent transmission found in the Philippines and Malaysia. In view of the continuous increase in measles cases, the World Health Organization has urged parents to bring their children to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent measles from spreading," a spokesman for the DH said.

The spokesman supplemented that, members of the public who are planning to travel to places with a high incidence or outbreaks of measles should review their vaccination history and past medical history, especially people born outside Hong Kong who might not have received a measles vaccination during childhood. Those who have not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines, with unknown vaccination history or unknown immunity against measles, are urged to consult their doctor for advice on vaccinations at least two weeks before departure.

The CHP reiterated that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles. During the COVID-19 pandemic over the past three years, parents, schools and healthcare workers in Hong Kong continued to support childhood immunisations, striving to maintain the immunisation coverage rates at a high level. As revealed by the vaccination uptake of primary school students and the findings of the territory-wide immunisation surveys regularly conducted by the DH, the two-dose measles vaccination coverage has been consistently maintained at a high level, well above 95 per cent, and the local seroprevalence rates of measles virus antibodies reflect that most of the people in Hong Kong are immune to measles. On the whole, the information available indicates that the risk of large-scale outbreak is considered to be low in Hong Kong. However, it is possible for some not fully vaccinated people to get infected and transmit the measles virus to susceptible people (including children aged below 1 who are not due for the first dose of measles vaccine).

The spokesman reminded members of the public that delays in vaccination will weaken the protection for children against measles, and parents are reminded to maintain up-to-date vaccination for their children for comprehensive and timely protection. All people who are non-immune to measles, especially foreign domestic helpers, people working or studying in tertiary institutions, and workers of sea/land/air border control points who may be at a higher risk of contacting an imported case, should receive two doses of measles-containing vaccine. In general, people can be considered as non-immune to measles if they (i) did not have the infection confirmed by laboratory test before, and (ii) had not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines in the past, or have unknown vaccination status or unknown immunity against measles. On the other hand, as measles was endemic in Hong Kong and most parts of the world before 1967, people born before 1967 are considered to have acquired immunity to measles through natural infection.

Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus. It

can be transmitted by airborne droplets or direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected persons, and, less commonly, by articles soiled with nose and throat secretions. A patient can pass the disease to other persons from four days before to four days after the appearance of a skin rash.

The spokesman advised, "The incubation period (the period from infection to appearance of illness) of measles ranges from seven days to 21 days. Symptoms of measles include fever, skin rash, cough, runny nose and red eyes. If symptoms arise, members of the public should wear surgical masks, stop going to work or school and avoid going to crowded places. They should also avoid contact with non-immune persons, especially persons with weakened immunity, pregnant women and children aged below 1. Those suspected to have been infected are advised to seek medical attention as early as possible and reveal relevant contact history of measles to healthcare professionals."

Besides being vaccinated against measles, members of the public should take the following measures to prevent infection:

- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, such as after sneezing;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Clean used toys and furniture properly; and
- Persons with measles should be kept out of school till four days from the appearance of a rash to prevent the spread of the infection to non-immune persons in school.

â€œFor more information on measles, the public may visit the CHP's [measles thematic page](#). Members of the public who are going to travel can visit the website of the DH's [Travel Health Service](#) for news of measles outbreaks outside Hong Kong.

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## [Cluster of Streptococcus Pyogenes \(Group A\) cases at Kwai Chung Hospital](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson of Kwai Chung Hospital made the following announcement today (March 22):

Three patients (aged 36 to 44) in a male psychiatric ward have presented

with skin infection since March 6. Appropriate viral tests were arranged for the patients and their test results were positive for Streptococcus Pyogenes (Group A). The patients concerned are being treated and they are in stable condition.

Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the 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.

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## [Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \\$19 million \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (March 21) conducted anti-illicit cigarette operations in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun. A total of about 4.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes, with a total estimated market value of about \$19 million and a duty potential of about \$14 million were seized, and a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre was shut down.

Customs in the early morning of yesterday searched a suspicious metal hut in Fung Kat Heung, Yuen Long. After inspection, Customs officers seized a total of about 3.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes inside the metal hut, on a nearby lorry and from a private car. A 46-year-old male driver who attempted to escape in another lorry was also arrested. The lorry and the private car, which were suspected to be used for storing and distributing illicit cigarettes, were detained as well.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers in the morning of the same day searched a lorry in a car park in Hing Fu Street, Tuen Mun, and further seized about 1 million suspected illicit cigarettes from the vehicle.

The arrested person has been charged with "dealing with goods to which the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance applies" and "resisting a member of the Customs and Excise Service", and the case will be brought up at the Fanling Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (March 23).

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multipronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

Customs reminds members of the public that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account ([crimereport@customs.gov.hk](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)) or online form ([eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/](http://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/)).



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## [Commission on Children convenes 20th meeting and supports further safeguarding physical and mental health of children on various fronts](#)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, today (March 22) chaired the 20th meeting of the Commission on Children.

At the meeting, members were briefed by government representatives on the measures taken to foster a sporting culture among children and future work direction. The Government had early on collected data on the physical fitness of Hong Kong citizens (including children aged between 7 and 16) under the Territory-wide Physical Fitness Survey for the Community to understand their latest physical fitness conditions. The survey results provide benchmarking data for the Government to develop community-based sports training courses and recreational activities and plan public play spaces for fostering the sporting culture among children.

The Education Bureau will continue to strengthen students' physical development through the sports curriculum and physical activities within and beyond the classroom holistically. The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, together with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, will continue to

promote a sports culture by organising a wide range of school-based and community-level sports activities. Members welcomed the various measures implemented by the Government and hoped that they could reinforce children's interest in sports and improve their physical fitness.

Also, members were briefed by government representatives on the proposed arrangements of expanding the scope of the Sexual Conviction Record Check Scheme to further strengthen the protection of children and mentally incapacitated persons. Considering the recommendations made by the Review of Sexual Offences Sub-committee under the Law Reform Commission, the Government consulted members on expanding the scope of the Scheme in phases to cover existing employees, self-employed persons and volunteers.

The Government will actively expedite the enhancement of the Scheme while ensuring that there is sufficient capacity to process applications made under the Scheme, thereby further reducing the risks of children and mentally incapacitated persons being sexually abused.

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## **CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (March 22) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza. The CHP appealed to members of the public to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) in a timely manner to better protect themselves during the influenza season.

The case involves a 22-month-old boy with good past health. He had developed a fever and cough with sputum since March 20 and sought medical attention at a private doctor on the same day. Later he presented with vomiting and diarrhoea on March 21 and attended the accident and emergency department of Kwong Wah Hospital. He was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit of the hospital on the same day. His respiratory specimen was positive for influenza A (H1) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with shock. He is now in serious 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 his home contacts was earlier diagnosed with influenza A infection and is in stable condition. Other home contacts are currently asymptomatic. 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.

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