

Update on latest MERS situation in United Kingdom

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (September 3) closely monitoring an additional imported case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the United Kingdom (UK) in August 2018, and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit.

According to the WHO, the case involves a male patient aged between 80 and 89 years with underlying illness, who is a resident of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) visiting the UK.

The patient was symptomatic while travelling from the KSA to the UK on August 16. Before the onset of symptoms, he had no history of recent travel or contact with sick patients in the KSA, but had history of direct contact with camels. The patient is now receiving treatment under isolation in the UK. According to the WHO, this is the fifth MERS case diagnosed in the UK, with the four previous cases diagnosed in 2012 and 2013.

"We will maintain close communication with the WHO and relevant health authorities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus," the spokesman said.

The Hajj pilgrimage ended in late August. If pilgrims feel unwell during the two weeks after returning to Hong Kong, they should wear a surgical mask and seek medical attention immediately and inform a doctor of their recent travel history, including transit.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS page of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the WHO's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).