

What You and Your Foreign Domestic Helper need to know to prepare for an influenza pandemic

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(Seasonal Influenza)



(Avian Influenza)

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Centre for Health Protection



Department of Health

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Influenza Pandemic

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Influenza pandemic occurred roughly every 10 to 50 years in the past, and may strike anytime. It is caused by emergence and global spread of a novel influenza virus originated from an animal influenza virus undergoing major genetic changes resulting in efficient human-to-human transmission. The human population has little or no immunity against the emerging pandemic influenza virus. This could occur with avian influenza or other types of novel influenza virus. Influenza pandemic is usually associated with a greater number of cases, higher severity of illness, a higher death toll and consequently greater social and economic disruption.

Just like everyone working and living in Hong Kong, your foreign domestic helper also needs to be protected from the risk of infection. It is not possible for him/her to totally eliminate the risk of infection, but they can reduce the risk by stepping up good hygiene practices. You are therefore advised to take the following simple steps:

1. Help your domestic helper maintain a healthy lifestyle as well as good personal and environmental hygiene habits. Advise them to keep household well ventilated. Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with either a clean cotton towel or a paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, hand hygiene with 70 to 80% alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative.
2. Estimate and procure protective items for your family members and helper: several weeks' supply of surgical masks, about one week's supply of antipyretics (only used when necessary), thermometer, liquid soap and tissue paper.



3. Unless otherwise directed by the Government, allow your helper to take statutory holidays and rest days as usual, and advise him/her to avoid visiting crowded or poorly ventilated places during peak season of influenza. Keep your helper updated on developments in an outbreak situation and any announcements made by the Government.



4. Keep your helper informed of Government advice with respect to travelling abroad and ensure compliance with border control measures. Remind your helper to avoid visiting zoos, wet markets, live poultry markets and farms or contact with infected birds or poultry (live or dead), their droppings or contaminated environments, and to wash hands frequently especially after touching birds and poultry. If they have flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, headache and muscle ache upon returning from affected areas, advise them to consult doctors promptly and inform the doctor of the travel history and wear a surgical mask to help prevent spread of the disease.



5. If your helper gets sick, ensure that he/she receives medical attention and care, gets adequate rest, and drinks plenty of water. Sick leave as prescribed by the attending doctor should be provided.



Provide a supportive environment for your helper to fight influenza
Help your helper to better care for your household