

香港特別行政區政府
衛生署
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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HONG KONG
SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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4 February 2020

Dear health professionals,

**Prevention of Severe Respiratory Disease associated
with a Novel Infectious Agent**

Further to our letter on 23 January 2020, we would like to provide you updates on the development of novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection and step-up recommendations on the infection control measures and advice.

In view of an increase in number of cases and additional countries reporting confirmed cases, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that the outbreak of nCoV meets the criteria for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and made temporary recommendations on 30 January 2020.

In Hong Kong, the Government has raised the response level under the “Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance” to the Emergency Level since 25 January 2020. This implies that the risk of health impact caused by the nCoV on the local population is high and imminent. As of 2 February 2020, Hong Kong has recorded 15 confirmed cases of nCoV infection. Twelve were in stable condition, two in serious condition and one in critical condition requiring intubation. The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has initiated epidemiological investigation and contact tracing. Among the cases, the place of infection of two cases were under investigation but the possibility of locally acquired infections exist. The CHP

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aspire to be an internationally renowned public health authority*

has set up a hotline (2125 1122) to answer public enquiries.

There is clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of nCoV. Besides, it was reported that cases might be infectious even before the onset of symptoms¹. Hence, we would like to remind healthcare workers to remain vigilant in adopting stringent infection control measures to reduce the risk of transmission from silent or suspected patients in healthcare settings. You are advised to step up infection prevention and control measures including carrying out temperature screening for patients/ clients/ visitors upon their arrival at your hospital/ clinic. Those with fever and respiratory symptoms should be advised to wear a surgical mask. In addition, healthcare workers are advised to follow the updated relevant interim guidelines as appropriate:

- Recommended Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in hospitals/ clinics under Serious/ Emergency Response Level (Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent) (Interim)
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/recommended_ppe_for_nid_eng.pdf
- Prevention of Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent – Infection Control Measures for Allied Health Professionals (Interim Guidelines)
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ic_measures_for_nid_allied_health_eng.pdf
- Key Elements on Prevention and Control of Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent in Healthcare Settings (Interim)
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ic_advice_for_nid_in_healthcare_setting.pdf

In addition, the CHP has updated the travel health advice. You may wish to advise your clients/ patients returning from the Mainland as follows:

- Members of the public returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland should stay home as far as possible if circumstances allow. Those who need to go out should wear a surgical mask for 14 days after returning to Hong Kong.
- Hong Kong residents who have visited Hubei Province in the past 14 days should wear a surgical mask immediately and approach staff of the DH's Port Health Division upon arrival. They will be quarantined for

¹ Rothe C, Schunk M, Sothmann P, et al. Transmission of 2019 nCoV infection from an Asymptomatic Contact in Germany. N Engl J Med. 2020 Jan 20;doi: 10.1056/NEJMc2001468.[Epub ahead of print]

observation after a health assessment.

- Hong Kong residents who had been to Hubei Province in the past 14 days but have already returned to Hong Kong should wear a surgical mask immediately and contact the DH hotline (2125 1122) for arrangement to be quarantined for observation.

For the latest information on the Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent, please visit www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html.

Thank you very much for your support.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr Kellie SO)
for Director of Health