

## **Swift Quarantine Actions to Stem Flu Outbreak**

With the confirmation of the first cluster of indigenous cases of human swine influenza in Hong Kong, the territory is gearing up its medical services and health advice to the public.

The Secretary for Education has ordered all primary schools, kindergartens, kindergarten cum child care centers and special schools to suspend classes for 14 days from June 12, and will review the need to continue the class suspension thereafter.

We believe that by closing primary schools, kindergartens and special schools for two weeks, we can substantially slow down community spread, protect the very young and reduce the risk to the general public, thereby reducing the worries of parents, families and teachers as well as the burden on our hospital and clinics.

**All inbound travelers/returnees to Hong Kong, especially students returning for the summer from affected areas, are asked to observe the following:**

- While overseas, exercise good personal hygiene, e.g. observe hand hygiene and cough manners. Those in affected areas should especially:
  - pay attention to announcements from the local government;
  - follow local public health guidelines, including any movement restrictions and preventive recommendations;
  - put on a mask during your stay;
  - do not have contact with sick people.
- Postpone your trip if you develop symptoms such as fever, cough and sore throat.
- Wear a mask and seek medical attention immediately for your own safety and health of travel collaterals.
- If you develop symptoms (fever and cough/sore throat/runny nose/headache/muscle aches/vomiting or diarrhoea) while on board, put on a mask and notify the crew right away. The crew will in turn follow established procedures and alert ground control.
- On arrival in Hong Kong, if you suffer from these symptoms, you may be required to undergo further examination and/or taken to hospital for isolation by public health authorities under the law.
- Upon landing, accurately and honestly complete the health declaration form; or present yourself to the port health post stationed at all border crossings if you have a health concern.
- After arrival from an affected area, pay close attention to their health and wear a mask for 7 days after arrival. You should seek medical consultation from public clinics or hospitals and contact the Department of Health hotline 2125 1111 immediately if fever or influenza-like symptoms appear.

Other public health measures to be taken in Hong Kong include:

- The Hospital Authority (HA) will open eight Designated Flu Clinics (DFCs) from June 13 for managing patients with influenza-like-illnesses (ILI), to be expanded to 18 DFCs contingent on demand. The clinics will open from 9am to 5pm. They shall cater for all patients with influenza-like symptoms (self-referred or referred by other medical practitioners), and shall operate similar to General Outpatient Departments, but without the need for prior booking.
- Current port health measures at border control points for inbound travelers will continue. These include health declaration, temperature screening, and boarding of flights by port health officers when alerted by crew to sick passengers. Port Health will post notices at all exit points and advise all departure and transfer travelers not to travel if they are having fever or flu symptoms.
- On the management of index patients and contacts, the HA will isolate and treat all index patients in HA hospitals during this early mitigation phase. They will increase surge capacity when necessary commensurate with disease incidence and demand.
- The Department of Health will subject very close contacts, such as family members, to directly observed chemoprophylaxis (DOC) and medical surveillance, as is the current practice. But if the number of local cases continues to increase, the department will gradually phase out the DOC arrangement and close the DOC clinics. The precise program for phasing out DOC will depend on the spread and speed of build-up in confirmed local cases.
- The Centre for Health Protection will no longer perform tracing of social contacts, given that their risk approximates that of the general public since the disease has taken root in the community by this time.
- On treatment, the HA, in consultation with the DH, will assess the treatment protocol on a continuous basis, and may vary it as circumstances change. Specimens from selected patients may be taken for surveillance, based on clinical assessment and contact history. Mild cases will be discharged home and only severe cases will be admitted to hospitals.
- On the use of antiviral, as the number of local cases accumulates to a certain point, the DH will order post-exposure prophylaxis for close contacts to be generally stopped, reserving antiviral medication for treating more serious hospitalized inpatients.
- For elderly homes, existing measures for outbreak at elderly homes will continue. Patients will be isolated and treated in HA hospitals. Others are to stay in institutions and wear masks and observe good personal hygiene.
- People at workplaces are advised to observe good personal hygiene and ensure proper disinfection of public places. Those with

influenza-like illness should stay at home and wear masks if necessary only if they really need to go out.

- All conferences, exhibitions and public events may continue as usual. Organizers must ensure all participants observe good personal hygiene and disinfect all public places of the relevant premises properly. Organizers must advise those with influenza-like illness not to participate, stay at home and wear masks if necessary when going out.
- Public transport companies will have to step up vehicle cleaning and disinfection, and advise staff and passengers to maintain good personal hygiene, and wear masks if not feeling well.
- Public utilities companies will also have to step up cleaning and disinfection, advise staff to maintain good personal hygiene, and initiate pandemic preparedness plans to ensure no disruption to essential services.