

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (19) in DH SEB CD/8/93/1 Pt.13

1 August, 2015

Dear Principal/ Person-in-charge,

Standing Down of Serious Response Level under Government's Preparedness Plan for MERS

I would like to inform you that the Government has decided to lower the response level under the Preparedness Plan for the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) from "Serious" to "Alert" on 1 August 2015 basing on the latest risk assessment of the MERS situation in Korea. At the same time, the Department of Health (DH) has also lifted the travel health advice of avoiding non-essential travel to Korea. The response level was raised to "Serious" and the travel health advice was issued to Hong Kong residents on 8 June 2015 due to the widespread outbreaks of MERS in healthcare institutions in Korea and the imminent risk posed to Hong Kong at that time.

The number of new cases occurring each day in Korea has declined significantly since late June. The last confirmed case was isolated in hospital on 3 July. The decline has coincided with much stronger contact tracing, monitoring and quarantine, suggesting that the disease control measures in Korea are working. According to the World Health Organization, the epidemiological pattern of the outbreak in Korea was similar to the hospital-associated outbreaks that have occurred in the Middle East and there was no evidence of sustained community transmission of MERS-coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in Korea. According to the current practice, the transmission of MERS-CoV in healthcare institutions in Korea is considered to have ceased as there is no new case detected within two maximum incubation periods (i.e., 28 days in total) after isolation of the last case on 3 July.



Since the activation of the Serious Response Level on June 8, as of noon yesterday (31 July), 403 suspected MERS cases were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of DH under the enhanced surveillance and all of them tested negative for MERS-CoV. The surveillance system of local public and

private hospitals has not detected any MERS cases so far. DH will continue to closely monitor the global situation of MERS.


Although the response level for MERS has been lowered since 1 August, members of the public should remain vigilant against MERS. Please remind your staff or students/children to avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels, avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry especially, and avoid unnecessary visit to healthcare facilities when travelling in the Middle East. When travelling, they are advised to take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene:

- Do not consume raw or undercooked animal products, including milk and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled;
- Seek medical consultation immediately if feeling unwell;
- Avoid visits to health-care settings with MERS patients;
- Wash hands before touching the eyes, nose and mouth, and after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose; and
- Wash hands before eating or handling food, and after using the toilet.

You may wish to note that the CHP has issued guidelines to school on prevention of MERS which can be accessed at:

http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice_to_school_on_prevention_of_middle_east_respiratory_infection.pdf).

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. Yonnie LAM)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health