Prevention of a New Type of Coronavirus Infection

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported two confirmed human cases of novel coronavirus infection on September 23, 2012. The first case involved a 60-year-old male Saudi national who died in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) recently. The second case was a 49-year-old male Qatari national who had travelled to the KSA. The virus isolate from the second patient was found to be the same coronavirus identified from the first fatal case.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause common cold as well as severe illness like SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in humans. So far, there is no evidence of ongoing transmission and no case has been detected in Hong Kong. The Centre for Health Protection is closely monitoring the situation.

In view of the severity of the illness and possibility of spread between human beings, healthcare providers in Hong Kong have been reminded to enhance vigilance in infection control and reporting of suspected cases.

Members of the public are advised to take the following preventive measures to protect against infection:

- Build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, and do not smoke;
- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands frequently with soap and water;
- Rub hands with 70 - 80% alcohol-based handrub if they are not obviously soiled;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Do not touch eyes, nose and mouth with bare hands;
- Wash hands after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose;
- Maintain good ventilation;
- Avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation; and
- Wear surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly if fever or symptoms of respiratory tract infection develop.

When planning to travel abroad and, in particular, visiting Middle East countries, please take note of the following:

**Before departure**: if feeling unwell, such as having fever, sore-throat, muscle pain or cough, do not travel. Postpone your trip until recovery.

**While overseas**: avoid direct contact with animals or birds and poultry. If feeling unwell, such as having fever or cough, put on a mask and inform hotel staff or your tour leader, and seek medical attention immediately.

**After returning home**: if falling sick, put on a mask, seek medical attention immediately, and inform the doctor of recent travel history.

Department of Health, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

November 2012