

Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent



Causative agent

“Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent” refers to the cluster of viral pneumonia cases occurring in Wuhan, Hubei Province, since December 2019. According to investigation by the Mainland health authorities, a novel coronavirus is found to be the causative agent.

Clinical features

According to information provided by the Mainland health authorities, symptoms of the cases include fever, malaise, dry cough and shortness of breath. Some cases were in serious condition. People of older age or having underlying disease are at a higher risk of deterioration into serious condition.

Mode of transmission and incubation period

The main mode of transmission of novel coronavirus is through respiratory droplets, the virus can also be transmitted through contact. Current information suggests that the incubation period ranges from 1 to 12.5 days (with median estimates of 5 to 6 days), but can be as long as 14 days.

Management

The main treatment is supportive.

Prevention

There is no vaccine for this infectious disease at the moment.

Health advice

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching one’s mouth, nose or eyes; before eating; after using the toilet; after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-traps) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80% alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;

- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.



For the latest travel advice (including health advice for Hong Kong residents returning from the Mainland), please visit the thematic webpage (www.gov.hk/ncv).



Centre for Health Protection Website www.chp.gov.hk

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