

9 January 2005

Health advice for travellers to prevent Meningococcaemia

In view of the recommendations by the Department of Health of the Philippines, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health advised travellers to Baguio City to avoid going to crowded places to minimize the risk of contracting meningococcaemia. If they could not avoid going to these places, they are advised to wear surgical masks and shorten their visit.

Disease Information

Meningococcal infection is caused by a bacterium known as meningococcus. It is transmitted by direct contact, including droplets from the nose and throat of infected persons. The incubation period varies from 2 to 10 days, commonly 3 to 4 days. The clinical picture may be variable. Severe illness may result when the bacteria invade the bloodstream (causing meningococcaemia) or the brain (causing meningitis). Meningococcaemia is characterised by the sudden onset of fever, intense headache, purpura, shock and even death in severe cases. Meningitis is characterised by sudden onset of intense headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, photophobia and stiff neck. Early cases can be treated effectively with antibiotics.

Health Advice

1. Wash hands frequently, observe good personal and environmental hygiene.
2. Avoid crowded places.
3. Avoid close contact with patients having fever or severe headache.
4. Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, hold the spit with tissue, discard it into a bin with a lid and wash hands immediately.
5. Travellers going to endemic area may call the Port Health Travel Health Centre at 2575 1221 regarding health advice and the need of vaccination. The vaccine comprises a single injection administered from the age of 18 months onwards, and confers protection after 7 to 14 days.
6. Travellers returning from endemic areas should consult doctors promptly if they feel unwell after the trip and inform doctors of the travel history.

Hotline

For more information, please call the Department of Health hotline at **2575 1221**

during office hours, or visit the website of the Hong Kong Travellers' Health Service at http://www.info.gov.hk/trhealth/e_HKTHS.htm.

Centre for Health Protection

Department of Health

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