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Mr. Joseph TUNG, JP
Executive Director
Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong
Fax: 2510 9907

Dear Mr. TUNG,

Health tips for travellers during Lunar New Year

With the Lunar New Year around the corner, we would like to take this opportunity to remind travellers from Hong Kong to adopt measures to protect their own health during the coming festive season. We should be most grateful if the below information could be passed to relevant parties.

Mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis and malaria occur throughout Asia while yellow fever is endemic in Central Africa and South America. Travellers should take the following active measures to prevent against mosquito-borne diseases:

- Wear loose, light-coloured, long-sleeved tops and trousers so as to cover the arms and legs, especially when in the outdoor;
- Apply insect repellents containing DEET to exposed parts of the body and clothing; and
- Stay in air-conditioned rooms or use bed-nets for added protection.

Travellers may contract food- and waterborne diseases such as travellers' diarrhoea, hepatitis A and typhoid fever through contaminated water and foods. They should observe the following measures to ensure good personal and food hygiene:

- Take only thoroughly cooked foods or foods from sealed packs or cans kept within the correct temperature range within their shelf life;
- Drink only boiled water, canned or bottled drinks, pasteurised milk or dairy products, and clean the bottle mouth before drinking from bottles;
- Avoid eating cold dishes like salads and no ice for beverages;

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- Wash and peel fruit by themselves; and
- Always observe good personal hygiene, wash hands before eating and after going to toilet.

Recently, there are cases of avian influenza infections reported in the mainland China and imported cases reported in Hong Kong. In addition, the seasonal influenza activity in Hong Kong and overseas remains very high. Maintaining good personal and environmental hygiene at all times is thus of paramount importance to prevent infection.

- To build up good body immunity by having a proper diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, reducing stress and avoiding smoking;
- To maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- To keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- To cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- To wash hands after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose;
- To maintain good ventilation;
- To avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks when staying in such places;
- To wear surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly if symptoms of respiratory tract infection or fever develop;
- Do not visit live poultry markets and farms. Do not have direct contact with poultry, birds and their droppings. If contact has been made, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water; and
- Cook poultry and eggs thoroughly before eating.

For those travellers going to destinations with extreme weather, especially the elderly and people suffering from heart diseases, respiratory illnesses or chronic medical conditions, they ought to be aware that this can trigger diseases. As such, they are advised to pay attention to the following:

(a) in extreme hot weather

- Wear light-coloured loose clothing to reduce heat absorption and facilitate sweat evaporation and heat dissipation;
- Do not engage in prolonged activities such as hiking or trekking; and
- Consider wearing long sleeved clothing made from close woven fabric, a wide-brim hat or using an umbrella, seeking shade, putting on UV blocking sun-glasses and applying sunscreen with a protection factor of 15 or above to protect against sun burn.

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(b) in extreme cold weather

- Take note of the weather forecast. Wear appropriately warm clothing, including hats, scarves, gloves and socks;
- Consume sufficient foods and drinks with high calorie contents, e.g. hot soup, hot rice and noodles;
- Perform regular exercise to facilitate circulation and production of heat; and
- Avoid alcoholic beverages.

Travellers are reminded to seek advice from their family doctors before they travel to determine the need for influenza vaccine and other preventive measures against travel-related diseases.

If travellers have fever, rash or other symptoms on return, they should seek medical attention promptly and inform the doctors of their travel history.

For more information on travel health advice, travellers may visit the Department of Health Travel Health Services' homepage at www.travelhealth.gov.hk/eindex.html

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. WM YU)
for Director of Health

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