

## **Department of Health's Guidelines on Handling Atypical Pneumonia Cases Discovered in Workplace**

Department of Health (DH) has drawn up a set of guidelines on the handling of suspected or confirmed Atypical Pneumonia (AP) cases discovered in workplace. They are -

- If a government department comes to know that its staff has contracted AP, it should notify the relevant regional office of DH.

DH would assess the situation and provide health advice. Depending on the severity of the case, the assessment and provision of health advice may be made over the phone. DH would visit the work place if circumstances so warrant. This practice is applied to all reports, be they coming from government departments or the private sector.

- When notification of a confirmed AP case is received, the relevant regional office of DH, with the consent of the patient, will inform his work place and provide health advice accordingly.
- Depending on whether the co-workers in the office are close contacts or social contacts as defined below, the follow-up actions will vary.

**Close Contact** - means persons having cared for, having lived with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions and body fluids of a person with AP.

**Social Contact** - means persons who have had contact with a person with AP but do not fit the definition of close contact.

Therefore, close contacts are mainly household contacts, and those who care for a person with AP. All co-workers and visitors of AP cases in hospitals are social contacts only. Social contacts would become close contacts if they had direct contact with respiratory secretions or body fluids of a AP case.

- Close contacts are encouraged to stay at home, away from the work place. They should report to a designated medical centre for check-up where they will be given sick leave certificates, with the reason "under medical surveillance".
- Apart from close contacts who present themselves for medical check-up voluntarily, DH may through its contact tracing efforts, identify persons who may be close contacts and issue them letters. DH will require these close contacts to present themselves for medical check-up at a designated medical centre.

- Social contacts can report for work as usual.
- A co-worker of a AP case (who should in normal circumstances only be a social contact) who has any doubt if he or she could become a close contact should ring the DH hot-line at 1872 222 for health advice.