



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局

Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
The People's Republic of China

本局檔號 Our Ref.: EDB(COA)/ADM/60/1/1(3)

電話 Telephone:

24 August 2010

To: Supervisors/Principals of all Schools

Dear Supervisor/Principal,

### **Stay Vigilant to Guard Against Communicable Diseases in New School Year**

The new school year is approaching. To facilitate schools' preparation for preventive measures against the spread of various communicable diseases such as human swine influenza (HSI), influenza, hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and enterovirus 71 (EV71) infection, schools are advised to make reference to the letter issued to all schools on 24 August 2010 by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (Appendix I). Schools should stay vigilant and put in place the various hygienic and preventive measures against communicable diseases, including the following:

#### **Maintaining a clean and hygienic school environment**

- Clean and disinfect the school premises thoroughly before class commencement and always maintain the school environment clean and hygienic.
- Maintain good indoor ventilation. If air-conditioning is used, the system should be properly maintained to ensure adequate provision of fresh air. Air filters should be cleaned and replaced regularly.

#### **Disseminating messages on prevention of communicable diseases and reviewing contingency measures**

- For more effective implementation of various preventive measures against the spread of communicable diseases in campus, schools should assign designated staff or a crisis management team to coordinate or supervise matters relating to the hygienic conditions of school environment and to brief students/staff and parents on the

relevant preventive measures.

- Schools should review from time to time the contingency measures so as to get well prepared for implementation of various contingency measures in case of class suspension due to the outbreak of any communicable disease. Schools should set up a mechanism for collecting the personal and contact information of students/staff members and notify parents that where necessary, information and contact details of students suspected to be infected would be released to CHP and relevant departments for effective implementation of control measures against communicable diseases.
- Remind students/staff to pay attention to personal hygiene and assist in promoting health messages on prevention of communicable diseases. Schools can download the relevant health reference/promotional materials and video clips, etc. from the CHP's website <http://www.chp.gov.hk>. For enquiries, please contact the Central Health Education Unit of the Department of Health during office hours (Tel No.: 2572 1476).
- Enlist parents' co-operation in paying attention to students' personal hygiene and environmental hygiene so as to tie in with the preventive measures taken by schools. A sample letter to parents is enclosed for reference (Appendix II).

### **Observing and implementing various hygiene and preventive measures**

- Schools should stay vigilant and observe and implement the following preventive measures to guard against the outbreak of any communicable diseases in schools.

#### General Preventive Measures

- Reminding students and staff to maintain good personal and environmental hygiene.
- Reminding students and staff to keep hands clean and washing hands properly with liquid soap, cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, and properly dispose of nasal and mouth discharge. Alcohol based handrub is an equally effective alternative for hand hygiene if hands are not visibly soiled.
- Cleaning and disinfecting regularly and thoroughly the school premises with diluted household bleach of 1 in 99 concentration, as well as disinfecting toys/places which are contaminated by secretions or excreta with diluted household bleach of 1 in 49 concentration immediately.
- Maintaining good communication with parents and helping them to understand the need to keep children at home for rest when they develop fever.
- Encouraging school staff to maintain vigilance and identify sick children at schools early.
- Reminding students to consult doctor for medical advice promptly upon development of symptoms, such as skin rash, fever, sore throat, diarrhoea, etc.
- Educating children that when they are having holidays outside Hong Kong, they should maintain personal hygiene and avoid visiting crowded public places.

- Having a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest and avoiding smoking and too much stress.
- Monitoring any unusual increase of communicable diseases and reporting to Central Notification Office about any suspected outbreak.

#### Human Swine Influenza / Influenza

- Avoiding gathering children in crowded places where the ventilation is not good.
- Reminding parents to continue to check their children's body temperature every day before sending them to schools, record the reading and sign the temperature record sheets, which should be returned to the schools.
- Maintaining good ventilation by keeping the windows open, turning off the air-conditioning and turning on exhaust fans as far as possible.
- Providing surgical masks to children who develop flu-like symptoms.
- Children with fever and respiratory symptoms are strongly advised not to attend school till 48 hours after fever has subsided.

#### Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease / Enterovirus 71 Infection

- Children with HFMD should be excluded from schools until fever has subsided and all the vesicles have dried and crusted. As an extra precaution, children with EV 71 infection are advised not to go to school for another two weeks after all symptoms subsided.
- Avoiding activities with shared toys such as ballpools as far as possible.

#### **Taking care of sick students/staff**

- Assign staff who have given their consent to take care of sick students/staff. The interaction of the sick persons with others should be prohibited as far as possible to reduce the risk of cross infection. The designated staff should put on a mask and pay special attention to their personal hygiene while taking care of sick students/staff.
- Persons with a medical condition that predisposes them to increased risks of influenza related complications, such as staff with chronic medical illnesses or who are pregnant, should not be assigned to take care of the sick students/staff.

#### **Early reporting of suspected outbreak cases of communicable diseases**

- If a suspected influenza outbreak occurs in school or an increasing trend or unusual situation in the number of persons taking sick leave due to the same infectious disease or similar symptoms is noticed (for example, three or more students in the same class develop symptoms of respiratory tract infections within a short time; or two or more students in the same class develop symptoms of hand, foot and mouth disease within seven days), schools should report the case to the Central Notification Office of Department of Health (Fax No.: 2477 2770; Tel No.: 2477 2772) by completing the "Suspected Infectious Disease Outbreak in School/Kindergarten Notification Form"

to facilitate the office to conduct an early epidemiological investigation and outbreak control. Schools should also forward a copy of the Notification Form to their respective Regional Education Offices/Joint Office for Pre-Primary Services.

- Besides, schools should keep in close contact with CHP for their keeping track of the latest communicable disease outbreak situation of the schools.

### **Observing guidelines in handling class suspension matters**

- If schools consider that the increasing trend of influenza infected cases might warrant class suspension, they have to consult the responsible officer of CHP and confirm the situation with the respective School Development Sections/Joint Office for Pre-Primary Services before arriving at any decision. Taking into consideration the situation at the time, including factors such as the number of children affected, severely ill or hospitalized, the progression of the outbreak and the effectiveness of control measures, CHP would advise schools on whether there is a need for class suspension. Schools should maintain close contact with CHP and this Bureau in this respect so that appropriate advice and support could be rendered.

For enquiries, please contact your respective Senior School Development Officers/Pre-primary Services Officers.

Yours sincerely,



(Y F LEE)

for Secretary for Education

監測及流行病學處



Surveillance  
And  
Epidemiology  
Branch

本署檔號 Our Ref.: ( 67 ) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 II

來函檔號 Your Ref.:

電 話 TEL.:

傳 真 FAX No.:

24 August 2010

To Headmaster/Person-in-charge,

**Be vigilant against influenza, hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD)  
and other communicable diseases**

The new academic year is approaching and I would like to take this opportunity to urge you to keep vigilant against influenza, HFMD and other communicable diseases at child care centres, kindergartens and schools.

Most recent surveillance data showed that Hong Kong is still in the summer influenza season. There has been an increase in local influenza activity since early July. In the past few weeks, there was a steady increase in number of influenza isolates detected by our laboratory. Besides, the consultation rates for influenza-like illness (ILI) among sentinel general practitioners (GPs) and general out-patient clinics and the number of ILI outbreaks in institutions also showed increases. The main circulating influenza viruses detected recently are human swine influenza, seasonal influenza A (H3N2) and seasonal influenza B.

The activities of HFMD and enterovirus 71 infection have gradually decreased in July and August after the peak in June. Nevertheless, recent consultation rates of HFMD detected by sentinel GPs are still higher than that recorded in the corresponding period of the past three years. Apart from the traditional summer season, a smaller winter peak of HFMD activity also occurred from October to December in the past few years.

Besides influenza and HFMD, outbreaks of other communicable diseases, like chickenpox, and norovirus may occur in institutions from time to time. To prevent such outbreaks, it is important for your staff and pupils to observe good personal hygiene. You are advised to re-visit the “*Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools /Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres*” ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/School\\_full\\_eng\\_20090115.pdf](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/School_full_eng_20090115.pdf)), which contain practical information on preventive measures of some common communicable diseases.

In addition, you are reminded to continue temperature checking for students. Students who develop symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting, skin rash, fever, or influenza-like illness should seek medical advice.

If you suspect any outbreaks occurring in your institution, please report to the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772. Schools should set up a mechanism for collecting the personal and contact information of students/staff members. Notify parents that where necessary, information and contact details of students suspected to be infected would be released to CHP and relevant departments for effective implementation of control measures against communicable diseases. CHP will give advice on the management of such outbreaks and take appropriate control measures. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at <http://www.chp.gov.hk>

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection



*[Sample Letter to Parents]*

*(This sample letter is for reference only. Individual schools should edit the sample letter in the light of their own situation.)*

xx September 2010

Dear Parents,

1. As advised by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH), outbreaks of communicable diseases such as human swine influenza, influenza, hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and enterovirus 71 (EV 71) infection may occur in institutions and schools from time to time.
2. Therefore, before the commencement of the new school year, we have thoroughly cleaned and disinfected the school premises. We would also urge all students/staff members to pay attention to their personal hygiene and environmental hygiene of the school.
3. For students' health sake, we would appeal to you that in addition to maintaining a clean and healthy household environment, please remind your children to constantly observe personal hygiene and keep the school environment clean. Please take note of the following measures:
  - Seek medical advice as soon as possible if your children develop symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting and skin rash. If symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough or influenza are developed, they should put on a mask immediately and seek medical care promptly. Please also notify the school and let the children stay at home for rest until symptoms have improved and fever has subsided for at least two days, or follow the medical advice on sick leave, whichever is longer.
  - Children with HFMD should be excluded from schools until fever has subsided and all the vesicles have dried and crusted. As an extra precaution, children with EV 71 infection should not go to school for another two weeks after all symptoms subsided.
  - Inform the school immediately if children are sick or have been admitted to hospital for surveillance. Such information and contact details of students would be reported to CHP or relevant government departments on a need basis to help institute effective control measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
  - Co-operate with the school by picking up children not feeling well from school and consulting the doctor immediately.
  - Provide children with handkerchiefs or tissue papers and remind them not to share towels or tissue papers with others.
  - Remind children to keep hands clean, cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of used tissue paper properly.
  - Before sending children to school, measure their body temperature, record the reading and sign the temperature record sheet which should be handed to the school every day. Attached please find a copy of the "Temperature Record Sheet".
4. At the beginning of the new school year, we have urged drivers and attendants of school buses/nanny vans not to drive/board these vehicles and make appropriate arrangements

if they have a fever or any influenza symptoms. They should also inform the school and parents of the situation immediately,

5. In case of any students being absent due to sickness, we would provide learning support for them so that their learning progress would not be affected.
6. We would like to appeal to parents again for co-operation in maintaining a clean and healthy household environment. Please also remind your children to pay attention to personal hygiene and to take all necessary preventive measures against communicable diseases.

Signature of Principal  
Principal of (school name)