

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (235) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 III  
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5 October 2016

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) and  
Acute Gastroenteritis (AGE)**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health writes to urge schools and institutions to be vigilant against HFMD and AGE outbreaks as we have recorded an upsurge activity of the diseases.

**HFMD**

The latest surveillance data shows that HFMD activity is increasing in Hong Kong. CHP recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of HFMD in recent weeks from 3 in week 36 (ending on 3 September) to 24 in week 40 (ending on 1 October). There were 14 institutional HFMD outbreaks recorded in the first three days of week 41 (ending on 8 October). Besides, surveillance of HFMD based at the Accident and Emergency departments and sentinel child care centres/kindergartens also recorded a corresponding increase of HFMD activity. As for EV71 infection in 2016, as of 4 October, 22 cases were recorded.

HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. The infection can occur throughout the year but the disease activity is usually peak from May to July in Hong Kong. From 2012 to 2014, a smaller peak also occurred from October to December. In 2015, the summer peak season of HFMD lasted longer than usual. Common symptoms are fever, sore throat and skin rash over the hands and feet. Although the illness is self-limiting in most cases, some cases especially those caused by EV71 may be associated with complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis.



## **AGE**

CHP also recorded an increased number of institutional outbreaks of AGE in the past few weeks. The number of AGE institutional outbreaks increased from 1 in week 36 (ending on 3 September) to 8 in week 40 (ending on 1 October). There were 7 institutional AGE outbreaks recorded in the first three days of week 41 (ending on 8 October).

Acute gastroenteritis is usually caused by norovirus or rotavirus infection. It is highly contagious and can be transmitted by consumption of contaminated food, contact with the vomitus or excreta of infected persons, contaminated objects and aerosol spread with contaminated droplets of splashed vomitus. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. Although infections are usually mild and self-limiting, they are highly infectious and may result in outbreaks that are difficult to control. It is a frequent cause of outbreaks in institutions. Such outbreaks may occur throughout the year but are known to occur more frequently in winter months.

To prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases, students/children who develop skin rash, fever, diarrhea or vomiting are strongly advised not to attend school and should seek medical advice. Besides, child care centres, kindergartens and schools should take measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, e.g., remind students/children and staff members to observe good personal, food and environmental hygiene, avoid sharing clothing and slippers among students/children, etc. For details, please refer to the “**Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools /Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres /Child Care Centres**”, which is accessible on the website of CHP at:

[http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guidelines\\_on\\_prevention\\_of\\_communicable\\_diseases\\_in\\_schools\\_kindergartens\\_kindergartens\\_cum\\_child\\_care-centres\\_child\\_care\\_centres.pdf](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guidelines_on_prevention_of_communicable_diseases_in_schools_kindergartens_kindergartens_cum_child_care-centres_child_care_centres.pdf)

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 for prompt epidemiological investigations and outbreak control.

For the latest information on communicable diseases, please visit CHP's webpages below:

- HFMD and EV71 infection ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view\\_content/16354.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/16354.html))
- Acute diarrhoeal diseases (<http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/24/10.html>)

Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health