

本署檔號 **Our Ref.** : (258) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 III
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2 December 2016

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

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

Following our letter to you on 5 October 2016 on the increasing number of institutional outbreaks in HFMD and AGE, we would like to urge schools and institutions to maintain vigilant against HFMD and AGE outbreaks.

HFMD

The latest surveillance data shows that the activity of HFMD has remained at high level. The number of institutional HFMD outbreaks ranged from 26 to 34 from week 45 (ending on 5 November) to week 48 (ending on 26 November). In the first 5 days of week 49, 25 institutional HFMD outbreaks were recorded. Besides, surveillance of HFMD based at the Accident and Emergency departments and sentinel child care centres/kindergartens (CCC/KG) also recorded a corresponding high level of HFMD activity. As for enterovirus 71 (EV71) infection in 2016, as of 1 December, 36 cases were recorded.

HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. The infection can occur throughout the year but the disease activity usually peaks 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 had recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of AGE in September 2016. Although the overall activities have decreased since mid-October, 4 to 5 institutional AGE outbreaks were still recorded from week 45 (ending on 5 November) to week 48 (ending on 26 November), affecting 44 to 66 persons per week. In the first 5 days of week 49, 5 institutional AGE outbreaks were recorded.

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 the 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. Strict personal, food and environmental hygiene with particular attention on handling of vomitus and faecal matter is important to prevent viral gastroenteritis outbreak in institutions.

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:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene, food and environmental hygiene in schools/centres
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards
- Clean and disinfect children's toys and other objects, contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards
- Maintain good indoor ventilation
- Pay attention to food hygiene
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked

- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises and food stalls

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

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 (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
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