

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (138) in DH SEB CD/8/27/1 Pt.21

May 17, 2017

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

### **Arrival of Influenza Season in Hong Kong**

I refer to my previous letter dated May 4, 2017, and would like to update you on the latest activity of seasonal influenza in Hong Kong. The influenza surveillance data of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) showed that the local influenza activity has further increased in the past two weeks, signaling the arrival of an influenza season in Hong Kong. The influenza activity may continue to increase in the coming weeks. This influenza season has arrived earlier than the traditional summer influenza seasons which usually started between June and September in the past few years.

Among the respiratory specimens received by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the CHP, the percentage tested positive for influenza viruses rose from 8.44% in the week ending April 22 to 12.03% last week. The predominating influenza viruses detected in the past four weeks were A(H3N2) (57.9%), followed by A(H1N1)pdm09 (27.3%) and B (12.0%), while influenza C only constituted 2.9%.

The number of influenza-like illness (ILI) outbreaks in institutions and schools reported to the CHP has also increased gradually in the past two weeks. It rose from four outbreaks in the week ending April 29 to seven and 17 outbreaks in the week ending May 6 and 13 respectively. In the first three days of this week (May 14-16), 14 ILI outbreaks have already been recorded. In the past two weeks, the ILI outbreaks occurred in primary schools (45.8%), residential care homes for the elderly (20.8%), kindergartens/child care centres (12.5%), secondary schools (4.2%) and other institutions (16.7%).



Young children, elderly people and patients with chronic diseases are prone to influenza infection and its complications. As schools and organisations are

collective assembly places, infectious diseases such as influenza could be easily spread among people through their daily contacts. Sources of infection could come from staff, visitors or students (especially those having active symptoms). In this regard, we would like to urge you to reinforce preventive measures in schools, kindergartens and child care centres so as to mitigate the impact of seasonal influenza.

***Schools should actively check the body temperature of all students every day when they arrive at school so as to identify students with fever.***

To prevent outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory infections, it is of prime importance that children with fever (oral temperature higher than 37.5°C, or ear temperature higher than 38°C), regardless of the presence of respiratory symptom, should not be allowed to attend school. They should be advised to seek medical advice and should avoid school till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Staff should also check their temperature before work every day and staff with respiratory illnesses or fever should refrain from work.

It is also important to measure and record students' body temperature properly. Please refer to Section 2.3 of the 'Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools / Kindergartens / Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres' published by the CHP for detailed information on monitoring of body temperature, which can be accessed 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)

In addition, the following measures are advised to prevent influenza and respiratory tract infections:

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination for personal protection;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70-80% alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Wash or clean hands frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, or after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and wash hands properly afterwards;
- Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin;
- Wear surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly if symptoms of respiratory tract infection or fever develop;

- Maintain good ventilation;
- Avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places when influenza is prevalent; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks when staying in such places; and
- Maintain balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

If you notice an increase in respiratory illnesses or absenteeism among children/ students, clients or staff, please report promptly to our Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770) for immediate epidemiological investigations and outbreak control. For the latest information on influenza activity, please visit the CHP's pages below for more information:

- The influenza page ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view\\_content/14843.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/14843.html)); and
- The weekly Flu Express report ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view\\_content/2108.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/2108.html)).

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK Chuang)  
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
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