



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(SDCT)2/ADM/60/1/1(14)

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To: Supervisors / Principals of all Schools

Dear Supervisor / Principal,

**Stay Vigilant against the Spread of Communicable Diseases in School  
Arrangements for Commencement of School after Chinese New Year Holiday**

Hong Kong is entering the winter influenza season and the Chinese New Year holiday is approaching. To facilitate schools' preparation for preventive measures against the spread of various communicable diseases such as influenza and hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD), schools are advised to stay vigilant and put in place the various hygienic and preventive measures against communicable diseases. Please refer to the Appendix for details.

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

If a suspected outbreak of communicable disease occurs in school or an increasing trend or unusual situation in the number of persons taking sick leave with similar symptoms or due to the same infectious disease is noticed (for example, three or more students in the same class develop symptoms of respiratory tract infections or two or more students in the same class develop symptoms of HFMD in succession within a short period of time), schools should report the case to the Central Notification Office of Centre for Health Protection (CHP) immediately (Fax No.: 2477 2770; Tel No.: 2477 2772) by completing the "Suspected Infectious Disease Outbreak in School / Kindergarten / KG-cum-CCC / Child Care Centre Notification Form" to facilitate CHP's early epidemiological investigation and outbreak control. Schools should also forward a copy of the Notification Form to their respective Regional Education Offices (REO) / Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres (JOKC) and keep in close contact with

CHP for their keeping track of the latest communicable disease outbreak situation of schools.

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

There were cases that school-based class suspension was arranged on the ground of outbreak of communicable diseases according to EDBC No. 9/2015 “Handling Emergency Situations in Schools”. Please be reminded that if there was a spread of communicable diseases, other than making reference to the aforesaid circular, schools should adhere to the guidelines stated in our letter issued on 26 August 2015 (titled Stay Vigilant against the Spread of Communicable Diseases in Schools), including **observation of the stipulated procedures and professional advice as well as recommendation of CHP** in handling class suspension matters. CHP will take into consideration the situation at the time and advise schools whether class suspension is needed, the period of class suspension and / or relevant arrangements. The relevant part of the letter is extracted below for reference:

*If schools consider that the increasing trend of infected cases might warrant class suspension, **they are required to consult the officer of CHP and confirm the situation with the respective REO/ JOKC before arriving at any decision.***

*Taking into consideration the situation at the time, including the number of children affected, severely ill or hospitalized, the progression of the outbreak and the effectiveness of control measures, CHP would advise schools whether class suspension is needed. Schools should maintain close contact with CHP and this Bureau in this respect so that appropriate advice and support could be rendered.*

If CHP has not advised a school to suspend classes, the school concerned should operate as usual and put in place various hygienic and preventive measures against communicable diseases as advised by CHP. If there are special circumstances, schools should contact REO / JOKC so that appropriate advice and support could be provided by this Bureau. Schools are reminded that, for self-arranged class suspension, adjustment of school holidays is normally required to make up for the loss of school days so as to ensure that students' learning would not be affected. We would like to emphasise that class suspension due to outbreak of communicable diseases is a very special arrangement. Schools must have sufficient grounds, adhere to relevant guidelines and follow the advice given by medical professionals when making the decision of class suspension.

This Bureau will continue to keep in close contact with CHP and release the latest information of communicable diseases to schools through emails. For enquiries, please contact your respective Senior School Development Officers / Senior Services Officers.

Yours sincerely,



(K K Lee)

for Secretary for Education

### Health and Preventive Measures against Communicable Diseases

#### Before Commencement of School

- Cleanse and disinfect the school premises thoroughly before the commencement of school. Always keep the school environment clean and hygienic.
- Maintain good indoor ventilation. If air-conditioning is used, the air filters should be cleaned and replaced regularly. The system should also be properly maintained.

#### After Commencement of School

- If students / staff members feel sick, for example, having flu-like symptoms developed, after travelling during the Chinese New Year holiday, they should wear a mask and seek medical attention promptly and inform the doctors of their exposure history. The affected students / staff members should also consult their doctors whether they are fit for going back to school.
- Schools should observe the “Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools / Kindergartens / Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres” issued by CHP to implement the preventive measures properly and review the contingency measures from time to time so that such measures can be implemented immediately when needed. Schools can get access to the aforesaid Guidelines via the following path:  

EDB Homepage ([www.edb.gov.hk](http://www.edb.gov.hk)) > School Administration and Management > Administration > About School > Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools > B. Guidelines/ Useful Materials
- Schools should also enlist parents’ co-operation in paying attention to students’ personal and environmental hygiene so as to tie in with the preventive measures taken by schools.

#### Preventive Measures against Influenza and other Respiratory Tract Infection

(Source of information: Website of CHP <http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/24/29.html>)

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination for personal protection;
- When hands are dirty, wash them with liquid soap and water properly;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70-80% alcohol-based handrub;
- 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 a mask if symptoms of respiratory tract infection 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 a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid being overstressed.