

Guideline on Prevention and Management of Human Swine Influenza in Boarding Sections of Schools

Preamble

Human swine influenza (HSI) is being transmitted in Hong Kong. Although HSI causes a relatively mild illness in most people, it is efficiently spread, given the lack of antibodies in the population, especially among children and adolescents.

This guideline provides guidance to reduce HSI transmission in the boarding section of schools and prevent large-scale outbreaks from occurring.

General principles

- Early identification and segregation of persons with influenza like illness (ILI) from others.
- Heightened awareness to personal and environmental hygiene.
- Vigilance and prompt notification on clustering of influenza-like illness (ILI).
- Take heed of Government advice regarding the latest public health measures to control HSI.

School management should adopt and promulgate the following measures in the boarding section to maximize protection of its students and staff.

1. Ensure a clean and hygienic environment

- Establish a regular cleaning schedule. Pay special attention to frequently touched areas and items (e.g. keyboard, elevator buttons, bathroom and door knobs).
- Disinfect the premises with 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (one part of 5.25% hypochlorite solution in 99 parts of water), wait until dry and then rinse with water. Use 70% alcohol for metallic surfaces.
- Encourage students to frequently clean their living quarters and keep the hostel clean.
- Ensure an adequate supply of surgical masks, gloves, alcohol-based handrub, thermometers, household bleach, and toilet utilities such as liquid soap, disposable towels or hand-dryers.
- Maintain good indoor ventilation, open windows wide and turn on exhaust fans. If air conditioning is used, the system should be properly maintained and air filters should be cleansed regularly to ensure an adequate provision of fresh air.

2. Maintain close communication with staff and students

- Provide information on the clinical features of HSI symptoms so that staff and students could recognize them early and report sickness in a timely manner. Remind staff and students about personal hygiene to prevent HSI transmission in the boarding section. Remind students to stay in their rooms, put on a mask and seek medical care if they develop flu symptoms such as fever, sore throat or cough.

- Explain to staff and students the importance of personal hygiene including hand washing, and cough manners such as covering mouth and nose with tissue paper when coughing and sneezing, putting soiled tissue paper in a lidded bin and washing hands afterwards.
- Advise staff and students to avoid visiting overcrowded and poorly ventilated venues.
- Request staff and students to notify the person in charge of the boarding section if they develop influenza symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough, or be admitted to hospital.

3. Keep sickness records of staff and students and notify suspected outbreaks early

- There could be occasional students/staff suffering from ILI. Persons in charge of the boarding section should monitor any unusual increase in ILI among students/staff.
- Inform students/ parents that the information they provide would be passed on to CHP when necessary to facilitate outbreak investigation and implementation of control measures.
- Report to Central Notification Office (CENO) (Tel: 2477-2772; Fax: 2477-2770) for epidemiological investigation and outbreak control when an increase or unusual sickness pattern among students/staff with the same infectious disease or similar symptoms is noticed.
- Suspend large gathering activities if outbreak is suspected.
- Keep students/ parents regularly updated on the outbreak situation.

4. Maintain Personal Hygiene and Healthy Lifestyle

- Encourage students to practise healthy lifestyle such as maintaining a balanced diet, having regular exercise and taking adequate rest to enhance body resistance.

5. Care for Sick Students in the Boarding Section

- Provide surgical masks to students who develop flu-like symptoms and ask them to stay in their rooms.
- Advise students to cover nose and mouth with tissue paper when coughing or sneezing, dispose soiled tissue paper in a lidded bin or flush it in the toilet, and perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- Advise parents to bring sick students home and seek medical consultation if necessary.
- For room mate(s) of the sick students, if they need to stay in the quarters for whatever reason (e.g. student from outside HK and being homeless), personal hygiene should be reinforced and they are to be reminded to report to staff promptly if he/ she develops ILI.
- Perform environmental cleansing and disinfection of the room with 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (1 part of 5.25% household bleach in 99 parts water), wait until dry and rinse with water. If the room is dirtied with respiratory secretions, disinfect with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (1 part of 5.25% household bleach in 49 parts water), leave for 15-30 minutes, and then rinse with water.
- Keep windows in the room with students in sickness wide open and turn on fans

/ exhaust fans for better ventilation. Keep air-conditioners well-maintained and dust-filters frequently cleaned.

- With consent, designate staff to care for ill persons to limit the risk of cross infection. Staff can make contact by e-mail, text messaging, phone calls, or other methods with each student who is in self-isolation.
- Pregnant staff and staff with chronic medical illnesses are predisposed to influenza related complications and they should not take care of the sick students.
- Ensure staff taking care of the sick students should adopt protective measures, which include performing hand hygiene before and after contact with the student, and wearing a surgical mask.
- Remind staff who come into contact with respiratory secretions or objects contaminated with respiratory secretions to observe hand hygiene immediately.
- Any staff who develop respiratory symptoms after taking care of a sick student should take rest at home, wear a surgical mask and seek medical advice.

6. Special attention to students with physical and/or intellectual disability

- Because of their impaired ability on self care, students with physical and/ or intellectual disability are often at higher risk of contracting HSI, and transmitting the infection to others.
- Staff of the boarding section should be vigilant on their physical conditions and watch out for ILI. Protective measures should be adopted duly when managing disabled students with ILI.

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