

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (157) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 III  
電話 Tel. :  
傳真 Fax No. : (852) 2711 4847

1 December 2015

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD) activity remains high**

I would like to draw your attention to the latest situation of Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD) and EV71 infection and enlist your support in the prevention of the spread of the disease, as the activity of HFMD has further increased and remained at very high level in Hong Kong. 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. There was also smaller winter peak in past few years but the HFMD activity in this year is unusual that it has been persistently high since the summer peak and has increased remarkably lately.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) recorded an increase in number of institutional HFMD outbreaks in recent few weeks from 23 in week 46 (ending on 14 Nov) to 64 in week 48 (ending on 28 Nov). Sentinel surveillance among private medical practitioners and general outpatient clinics also detected an increase in HFMD activity recently. The weekly consultation rates of HFMD based at sentinel private medical practitioners increased from 2.4 to 3.7 (number of cases per 1000 consultations) from week 46 (ending on 14 Nov) to week 47 (ending 21 Nov). The weekly consultation rates of HFMD based at sentinel general outpatient clinics also increased from 0.4 to 1.2 (number of cases per 1000 consultations) from week 46 to week 47. Besides, surveillance of HFMD based at the accident and Emergency departments and sentinel child care centres/kindergartens also remains at high level of activity. As of 30 November 2015, 56 EV71 infections were recorded in 2015 as compared with 68 cases in the same period of 2014. Among the 56 cases recorded in 2015, six cases developed severe complication.



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.

Maintaining good hygiene practice is the most important measure to prevent HFMD and EV71 infection. Schools and institutions are recommended to take the following steps to prevent outbreak:

- Maintain good communication with parents and help them to understand the need to keep children at home for rest when they develop fever or rash. Advise them to see doctor promptly if they develop symptoms suggestive of HFMD.
- Encourage staff to screen for sick children before they enter the school. Children with HFMD should be excluded from schools until fever has subsided and all the vesicles have dried and crusted. (As an extra precaution, children with EV71 infection are advised not to go to school for another two weeks after all symptoms subsided, since the virus may be excreted in stool for some weeks and is associated with a higher risk of complications.)
- Supervise children on personal hygiene practices, especially on how to wash the hands properly with liquid soap before meals and after going to toilet, cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, and proper disposal of nasal and mouth discharge.
- Avoid high risk toys such as ball pools. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surface, furniture and toilets regularly with diluted bleach of 1:99 concentration (mixing one part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite to 99 parts of water). Disinfect toys/places which are contaminated by secretions or excreta with diluted household bleach of 1:49 concentration.
- Remind staff to wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water after changing diapers for each child, to disinfect diaper-change area by diluted bleach, and to dispose soiled diapers properly.
- Keep the environment clean and hygienic, and follow the “Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools /Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres /Child Care Centres” which is available 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)
- Incorporate in your health education to children that when they are having holidays outside Hong Kong, they should still remember to keep their hands clean and avoid touching vesicles on hands of other sick children.

If there is suspected HFMD outbreak (e.g. two or more students in the same class (or had studied in the same setting in case of kindergartens or child care centres) develop symptoms of HFMD in succession within a short time), please inform the Central Notification Office of the CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772. The CHP will give advice on the management of such cases and take appropriate control measures.

We may consider advising schools to suspend classes for a period of 14 days when situation warrants. Examples of such scenarios include occurrence of further cases in an institution attended by a confirmed EV71 case after stepping up control measures, OR occurrence of an EV71 case who is suffering from severe complication and the institution the child is attending has an associated HFMD outbreak. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at <http://www.chp.gov.hk>.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health