

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (210) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 III
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18 May 2016

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD) and
Enterovirus 71 (EV71) infection**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health writes to urge schools and institutions to be vigilant against HFMD outbreaks and EV71 infection as Hong Kong is entering into the traditional peak season of the disease.

The CHP recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of HFMD in recent weeks from 5 in week 18 (ending on 30 April) to 30 in week 20 (ending on 14 May). There were 13 institutional HFMD outbreaks recorded in the first three days of week 21 (ending on 21 May). Besides, surveillance of HFMD based at the Accident and Emergency departments and sentinel child care centres/kindergartens also recorded a corresponding increase of HFMD activity. As for EV71 infection in 2016, as of 17 May, 3 cases were recorded.

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. 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
- 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SK Chuang', written in a cursive style.

(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health