

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (277) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 III

12 October 2017

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)**

I would like to draw your attention to the recent increase in activity of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and urge schools and institutions to be vigilant against the disease.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of HFMD in recent weeks, from 3 in week 36 (ending on 9 September) to 13 in week 40 (ending on 7 October) of 2017. There were 14 institutional HFMD outbreaks recorded in the first three days of this week. Besides, sentinel surveillance based at private doctors and Accident & Emergency Departments communicable diseases syndromic surveillance also recorded a corresponding increase of HFMD activity last week. Moreover, a total of 47 EV71 cases had been recorded this year (as of 10 October), compared with 38 last year. Regarding severe paediatric EV infection other than EV71 and poliovirus, six cases had been recorded so far this year, compared with 11 in 2016.

HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. HFMD occurs throughout the year in Hong Kong but the disease activity usually peaks between May and July. A smaller peak may also occur from October to December. Common symptoms include 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 measures to prevent outbreak:

- Maintain good communication with parents and advise them to keep their children at home for rest when they develop fever or rash. People who develop symptoms suggestive of HFMD should seek medical advice promptly.
- Encourage staff to screen children for signs and symptoms of HFMD before they enter the school. Children with HFMD should be excluded from school 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 the infection 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 play facilities 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 a suspected HFMD outbreak (e.g. two or more students in the same class or 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 by fax (2477 2770) or phone (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 a HFMD outbreak in an institution with an EV71 case who is suffering from severe complication. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at [http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view\\_content/16354.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/16354.html).

Yours faithfully,

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