

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (12) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 IV  
電話 Tel. :  
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3 October 2018

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease and Acute Gastroenteritis**

I would like to draw your attention to the recent increases in activities of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and acute gastroenteritis (AGE) and urge schools and institutions to be vigilant against the diseases.

**HFMD**

According to the latest surveillance data of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health, sentinel private medical practitioners and General Out-patient Clinics (GOPC) recorded an increase of HFMD activity in the past two weeks. The weekly consultation rate of HFMD at private medical practitioners has increased from 0 per 1,000 consultations in the week ending 15 September to 2.3 and 1.2 in the subsequent two weeks. The rate at GOPC has increased from 0.4 in the week ending 15 September to 1.1 in the subsequent week.

The number of institutional HFMD outbreaks in the past two weeks were 11 (affecting 32 persons) and eight (affecting 24 persons) respectively. As of 2 October, five outbreaks (affecting 22 persons) have already been recorded in the first three days this week. In the past four weeks, kindergartens and child care centres (CCC/KG) reported most outbreaks (43 per cent). As for enterovirus (EV) 71 infection, the weekly number of cases recorded has increased from one case in the week ending 15 September to two and three cases in the subsequent two weeks respectively. As of 2 October, 42 cases have been recorded this year.



HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. The infection can occur throughout the year in Hong Kong but the disease activity usually peaks from May to 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.

### **AGE**

CHP's latest surveillance data also showed an increase in the number of institutional AGE outbreaks, from two (affecting 11 persons) in the week ending September 22 to five (affecting 38 persons) last week. In the last four weeks, most outbreaks occurred in primary schools (44 per cent). Sentinel CCC/KG and residential care homes for the elderly also recorded a corresponding increase of the activity of diarrhoea.

AGE is usually caused by norovirus or rotavirus infection. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. These viruses can be transmitted by consumption of contaminated food, contact with the vomitus or excreta of the infected persons, contaminated objects and aerosol spread with contaminated droplets of splashed vomitus. They are highly infectious and may result in outbreaks that are difficult to control. AGE outbreaks may occur throughout the year but are known to occur more frequently in winter months.

To prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases, students/children who develop skin rash, fever, diarrhea or vomiting are strongly advised not to attend school and should seek medical advice. Besides, CCC/KG and schools should take measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, e.g., remind students/children and staff members to observe good personal, food and environmental hygiene, avoid sharing clothing and slippers among students/children, etc. For details, please refer to the **“Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools /Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres /Child Care Centres”**, which is accessible on the website of CHP 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)

If you suspect any outbreaks occurring in your institution, please report to the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772 for prompt epidemiological investigations and outbreak control.

For the latest information on communicable diseases, please visit CHP's webpages below:

- HFMD and EV71 infection ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view\\_content/16354.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/16354.html))
- Acute diarrhoeal diseases (<http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/24/10.html>)

Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health