

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (151) in DH SEB CD/8/27/1 Pt.22

January 2, 2019

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Arrival of the 2018/19 Winter Influenza Season in Hong Kong
and Additional Measure on Temperature Monitoring**

I would like to update you on the latest activity of seasonal influenza in Hong Kong. The influenza surveillance data of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) showed that the local seasonal influenza activity has continued to increase in the past week and exceeded the baseline thresholds, indicating that Hong Kong has entered the 2018/19 winter influenza season. The community should heighten vigilance for protection against influenza.

The positive percentage of seasonal influenza viruses among respiratory specimens received by the CHP has increased steadily since mid-November and rose to 14 per cent last week. The circulating influenza viruses were predominantly influenza A(H1N1)pdm09. Of note, past epidemiological data showed that children and adults aged from 50 to 64 years were relatively more affected in seasons dominated by influenza A(H1).

The weekly number of institutional influenza-like illness (ILI) outbreaks reported to the CHP ranged from 8 to 17 in the past four weeks (December 2 to 29), affecting 341 persons. These outbreaks occurred in kindergartens/child care centres (30), primary schools (9), residential care homes for the elderly (6), residential care homes for the disabled (4), secondary schools (2), hospital (1) and special school (1).



We anticipated that the local seasonal influenza activity will continue to rise in the coming weeks and remain at an elevated level for some time. Members of the public should maintain good personal protection against influenza. Particularly, children, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses are urged to receive influenza vaccination as early as possible to prevent seasonal influenza as

it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination. They should promptly seek medical advice if influenza-like symptoms develop so that appropriate treatment can be initiated as early as possible to prevent potential complications.

Young children, elderly people and patients with chronic diseases are prone to influenza infection and its complications. As schools and organisations are collective assembly places, infectious diseases such as influenza could be easily spread among people through their daily contacts. Sources of infection could come from staff, visitors or students (especially those having active symptoms). In this regard, we would like to urge you to reinforce preventive measures in schools, kindergartens and child care centres so as to mitigate the impact of seasonal influenza.

Schools should actively check the body temperature of all students every day during this influenza season when they arrive at school so as to identify students with fever. This additional measure should continue until the local influenza activity returns to the baseline level. By then, the CHP will issue another letter to inform you.

To prevent outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory infections, it is of prime importance that children with fever (oral temperature higher than 37.5°C, or ear temperature higher than 38°C), regardless of the presence of respiratory symptoms, should not be allowed to attend school. They should be advised to seek medical advice and should avoid school till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Staff should also check their temperature before work every day and staff with respiratory illnesses or fever should refrain from work.

It is also important to measure and record students' body temperature properly. Please refer to Section 2.3 of the 'Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools / Kindergartens / Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres' published by the CHP for detailed information on monitoring of body temperature, which can be accessed 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

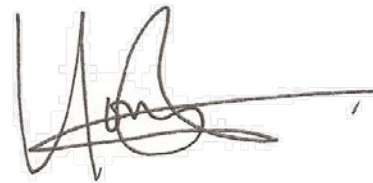
Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the following measures are advised to prevent influenza and respiratory tract infections:

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70-80% alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin;
- Put on a surgical mask when respiratory symptoms develop;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When influenza is prevalent, avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks in such places; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

If you notice an increase in fever/respiratory illnesses among children/ students, clients or staff, please report promptly to our Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770) for prompt epidemiological investigations and outbreak control. For the latest information on influenza activity, please visit the CHP's pages below for more information:

- The influenza page (http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/14843.html); and
- The weekly Flu Express report (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/resources/29/304.html>).

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Yonnie LAM', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

(Dr. Yonnie LAM)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health