

本署檔號 **Our Ref.** : (21) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 IV
電 話 **Tel.** :
傳 真 **Fax No.** :

22 May 2019

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 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 the past two weeks, from seven in week 19 (ending 11 May) to 16 last week. Nine institutional HFMD outbreaks have already been recorded in the first two days of this week. In addition, surveillance of HFMD based at sentinel child care centres/kindergartens (CCC/KG) recorded a corresponding increase of HFMD activity recently.

HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. In Hong Kong, HFMD occurs throughout the year with the usual peak season occurring from May to July. A smaller peak may also occur from October to December. Common symptoms of HFMD include fever, sore throat and skin rash over the hands and feet. Although HFMD is usually self-limiting, some patients, especially those infected with enterovirus 71 (EV71), may develop complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis.

Maintaining good personal and environmental hygiene is the most important measure to prevent HFMD and EV71 infection. Schools are recommended to take the following measures to prevent outbreaks:

- 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.
- 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 a CCC/KG developing 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). 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 case of EV71 infection after stepping up

control measures, OR occurrence of a HFMD outbreak in an institution with a case of EV71 infection 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.

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