

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (25) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 IV
電話 Tel. :
傳真 Fax No. :

25 September 2019

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

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

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

HFMD

The summer peak of HFMD in 2019 started in May and the HFMD activity remained at a high level throughout June and July. After a transient decrease in August, the local HFMD activity has increased again after the start of the new school year in September. There was significant increase in the number of institutional outbreaks in the past two weeks, from 24 (affecting 112 persons) in the week ending 14 September to 42 (affecting 183 persons) in that ending 21 September. Thirty-five outbreaks (affecting 97 persons) have already been recorded in the first three days of this week. These 101 outbreaks occurred in child care centres/kindergartens (60), primary schools (25), secondary schools (13) and others (3).

Besides, surveillance data based at Accident and Emergency Departments and sentinel child care centres/kindergartens showed that the HFMD activity remained at a high level. As of 24 September, a total of five cases of enterovirus (EV71) infection and eight severe paediatric enterovirus infection (other than EV71 and poliovirus) has been recorded in 2019.



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 EV71, may develop complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis.

AGE

The CHP also recorded an increased number of institutional outbreaks of AGE in the past few weeks. The number of AGE outbreaks increased from two (affecting 26 persons) in the week ending on 7 September to seven (affecting 77 persons) in that ending 21 September. The 15 outbreaks recorded in the past three weeks occurred in child care centres/kindergartens (9), primary schools (3), secondary school (1), elderly home (1) and other (1). AGE is usually caused by norovirus or rotavirus infection. They can be transmitted by consumption of contaminated food, contact with the vomitus or excreta of 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.

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, child care centres, kindergartens 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:

https://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 webpage at:

- HFMD and EV71 infection (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/16354.html>)
- Acute diarrhoeal diseases
(<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/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,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'SK CHUANG', is centered on the page.

(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health