

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (18) in DH CDB/8/27/1 Pt 23

January 9, 2020

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Arrival of the 2019/20 Winter Influenza Season in Hong Kong
and Additional Measure on Temperature Monitoring**

We would like to alert you 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 2019/20 winter influenza season. The community should heighten vigilance for protection against influenza.

The positive percentage of seasonal influenza A and B viruses among respiratory specimens received by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has increased steadily since mid-December last year and rose to 10.09% last week, which was higher than the baseline threshold of 9.21%. The circulating influenza viruses in the past two weeks were predominately influenza A(H1) (66.3%) and A(H3) (30.4%), with very few influenza B positive detections.

The number of institutional influenza-like illness (ILI) outbreaks reported to the CHP was four in the past two weeks, affecting 15 persons. In the first four days of this week (January 5-8), the CHP recorded 23 outbreaks, affecting 95 persons. The recorded outbreaks included nine in primary schools, seven in kindergartens/child care centres, five in residential care homes for the elderly, two in residential care homes for persons with disabilities, two in secondary schools, one in a residential child care centre and one in a hospital.

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:

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes; after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretion after

- coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel or hand dryer.
 - If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, hand hygiene with 70 to 80% alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly.
 - When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
 - Build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest, reducing stress, do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption.
 - Maintain good indoor ventilation. Avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks while in such places.

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 and prevention measures, please visit the CHP's pages below for more information:

- The influenza page (http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/14843.html)
- Easy Digests for Seasonal Influenza (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/seasonal_influenza_easy_digests.pdf)
- Prevention of Seasonal Influenza Infographic (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/her/prevention_of_seasonal_influenza.pdf)
- Video on "Prevent diseases · Maintain good hygiene" (<https://youtu.be/X0OxrsgAP2w>)

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health