

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (75) in DH CDB/9/12/5 Pt.1

24 September 2021

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

**Latest Situation of Outbreaks of Upper Respiratory Tract Infection**

We are writing to update you on the latest situation of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) outbreaks in Hong Kong and would like to remind you to maintain vigilance against respiratory tract infection at school.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has recently received increased reports of institutional URTI outbreaks. A total of 101 URTI outbreaks affecting 611 persons were reported in recent two weeks (from 10 to 23 September), compared to 10 URTI outbreaks affecting 52 persons recorded in the previous two weeks (from 27 August to 9 September). Majority of the outbreaks reported in recent two weeks occurred in kindergartens/child care centres (76%), followed by primary schools (18%); and there were six outbreaks involving special child care centres (6%).

Young children, elderly people and patients with chronic diseases are prone to respiratory tract infection and its complications. As schools are collective assembly places, infectious diseases could easily spread among people through daily contacts. Sources of infection could come from staff, visitors or students (especially those having active symptoms). In this regard, you are urged to reinforce preventive measures in your institution so as to mitigate the impact of upper respiratory tract infection.

***Schools should actively check the body temperature of all students every day when they arrive at school so as to identify students with fever. Staff should also check their temperature before work every day. Students and staff with fever or respiratory illnesses should refrain from school and seek medical attention immediately. This measure should continue until further notice.***



To prevent outbreaks of respiratory tract infection including COVID-19, it is of prime importance that staff and children with fever (oral temperature higher than 37.5°C, or ear temperature higher than 38°C) should not be allowed to attend school, regardless of the presence of respiratory symptoms. They should wear a surgical mask and consult doctors promptly.

Since the symptoms of influenza-like illness (ILI) and URTI are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, the schools with ILI or URTI outbreaks will be covered in the compulsory testing notice (CTN) to exclude the possibility of COVID-19 infection. The whole school of kindergartens/child care centres and the affected forms of primary and secondary schools are required to suspend teaching activities for cleaning for 5 days. All students and staff affected by class suspension are required to receive COVID-19 testing under CTN and must be tested negative before they are allowed to go back to the school after school resumption. Starting from 8 September 2021, persons subject to compulsory testing in relation to an URTI or ILI outbreak in a school must attend to any of the mobile specimen collection stations, community testing centres or recognised local medical testing institutions to undergo professional swab sampling in fulfilling the requirements for compulsory testing. Young children aged below three years may continue to undergo the test through stool specimen collected using bottles provided by the CHP

(<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202109/07/P2021090700940.htm>).

Schools are urged to enhance personal and environmental hygiene, as well as take precautionary measures to minimise the risk of spread of COVID-19. Please refer to “Health advice to schools for the prevention of coronavirus disease (COVID-19)” which is available at the CHP website ([https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice\\_to\\_school\\_on\\_prevention\\_of\\_nid\\_eng.pdf](https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice_to_school_on_prevention_of_nid_eng.pdf)).

We would like to draw your attention, in particular, to measures on temperature screening, hand hygiene, wearing mask and keeping social distancing, as well as the parts related to meal arrangement and physical activities, etc. For detailed information on monitoring of body temperature, 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.

Please draw the attention of the staff and students in your institution to the CHP's guidelines on proper hand hygiene and proper use of mask, which are accessible at the CHP webpage <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/19728.html>; and <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/19731.html>.

Furthermore, please promulgate to students and staff the following video clips produced by the CHP on personal and environmental hygiene, which are available under "Video Demonstration" section of "Infection Control Corner" at the CHP website (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/resources/346/index.html>):

- Washing hands with soap and water
- Proper use of mask
- Procedures for preparing and using diluted bleach
- Handling vomitus
- Handling contaminated linen and clothing

The following measures are advised to prevent upper respiratory tract infection:

- Surgical mask can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Cover the nose and mouth with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- 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;
- 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 the CHP's Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770). The CHP will conduct epidemiological investigation and provide advice on necessary prevention and control measures.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'SK CHUANG', written in a cursive style.

(Dr. SK CHUANG)  
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health