

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (76) in DH CDB/8/27/1 Pt. 23

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Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

Arrival of 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 influenza season. The community should heighten vigilance for protection against influenza.

Among the respiratory specimens received by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) and the Hospital Authority (HA), the weekly percentage of detections tested positive for seasonal influenza A or B viruses has increased gradually since early March and reached 9.89% last week, which was higher than the baseline threshold of 9.21%. Majority of the detections in the past four weeks were influenza A(H1) (77%) and A(H3) (21%) viruses.

The weekly number of institutional influenza-like illness (ILI) outbreaks reported to the CHP ranged from one to two in early and mid-March. In comparison, the CHP recorded 12 outbreaks in the week ending 1 April, affecting 49 persons. The 12 recorded outbreaks involved five in primary schools, one in a secondary school, two in residential care homes for the elderly, one in a residential care home for persons with disabilities, two in special schools and one in a hospital.

Members of the public should maintain good personal protection against seasonal influenza. Particularly, children, elderly and chronic disease patients are urged to receive seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection as it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies 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 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. Staff should be alert of their own conditions every day and should refrain from work if they have fever or respiratory symptoms.

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:

- Surgical masks 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;
- For high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised), 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;
 - 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 classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
 - Build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

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

- The influenza page (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/14843.html>)
- Prevention of Seasonal Influenza Infographic (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/prevention_of_seasonal_influenza.pdf)
- Video on "Prevent diseases · Maintain good hygiene" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJFekuVwJ-s>)

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health