

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (54) in DH CDB/8/82/1

25 August 2025

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge / Teacher,

**Appeal to Stay Vigilant Against Communicable Diseases in the
New School Year**

As the new school year is going to commence, we would like to take this opportunity to urge you to maintain vigilance against potential spread of communicable diseases in the school setting.

Mosquito-borne diseases (including chikungunya fever and dengue fever)

Both temperature and rainfall remain at high levels during the summer, leading to a continuous risk of the spread of various mosquito-borne diseases in Hong Kong. The *Aedes albopictus* mosquito, which can transmit the chikungunya virus, dengue virus, and Zika virus, is very common in Hong Kong. Mosquito-borne diseases are not transmitted between individuals; however, the blood of infected patients during the initial phase of the illness (particularly during fever stage) has a high viral load, making them contagious to mosquitoes. If a mosquito bites an infected individual while they are infectious, the disease might be further spread to other people locally via mosquitoes.

Chikungunya fever (CF) is caused by the chikungunya virus. The disease is characterised by fever and debilitating joint pain. As of 21 August, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) recorded nine CF cases this year, all were imported cases.

Dengue fever (DF) is an acute febrile viral illness with symptoms such as high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, rash, muscle and joint pain. The symptoms of first infection are usually mild, but subsequent infections with dengue virus of other serotypes are more likely to result in severe dengue which may progress to circulatory failure, shock and even death. As of 21 August, the CHP recorded 41 DF cases this year, all were imported cases.

In view of CF and DF outbreaks are occurring in many parts of the world this year, the risk of continual occurrence of imported cases is still high. There is also a possibility that imported cases may lead to local transmission. Therefore, we would like to seek your help to prevent mosquito-borne diseases by taking anti-mosquito measures, and urging students and staff to adopt personal protective measures.

School should take the following preventive measures to prevent



accumulation of stagnant water and eliminate mosquito breeding sites:

- Put all used cans and bottles into covered dustbins
- Change water for plants at least once a week, avoid using saucers underneath flower pots
- Cover all water containers, wells and water storage tanks tightly
- Keep all drains free from blockage
- Top up all defective ground surfaces to prevent the accumulation of stagnant water

Furthermore, the school management is advised to appoint designated staff for mosquito prevention and control in the school premises. Details are available from the guidelines published by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department:

https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pestcontrol/library/pdf_pest_control/mosquito_school.pdf.

Respiratory infections

The latest surveillance data from the CHP shows that the local activity of seasonal influenza has been increasing slowly since mid-July. For other respiratory pathogens, the activity of COVID-19 remains at a low level while that of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) has been increasing gradually since June, and it is expected that RSV will remain active for some time. Overall, among the paediatric respiratory specimens received by the Hospital Authority, rhinovirus/enterovirus and RSV have relatively higher activity levels. With reference to the previous surveillance data, the CHP expected that after the start of the new school year, more outbreaks of respiratory tract infections may be reported from schools, and at the end of this year or early next year, activity of COVID-19 and seasonal influenza may increase.

To prevent respiratory infections, students / staff members should observe strict personal, hand and environmental hygiene at all times. Persons with respiratory symptoms, even if the symptoms are mild, should wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly. They should perform hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask.

Seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) can provide protection against influenza infection, and lower the chance of serious complications and deaths brought about by infection. Parents are advised to arrange their children to receive SIV for better personal protection by participating in the SIV school outreach activities or visiting their family doctors in the new school year. Research studies have shown that SIV among children could reduce school absenteeism. Parents should note that it takes about two weeks for the body to develop a sufficient level of antibodies to protect against influenza infection after vaccination, so vaccination should be received early before the winter.

The CHP has sent letters to all schools in Hong Kong to inform schools of the arrangement of the 2025/26 SIV School Outreach Programme (SIVSOP). Majority

of the schools have responded positively, which is encouraging. The Department of Health (DH) launched the “SIV School Outreach Commendation Scheme” last year. This scheme honours schools with high student vaccination rates with the target of motivating other schools to promote SIV among their students. Schools with outstanding student vaccination rate will be awarded a certificate of commendation and the list of awardees will be available on the CHP website as an encouragement.

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

HFMD is a common disease in children usually caused by enteroviruses such as coxsackie viruses and enterovirus 71 (EV71). In Hong Kong, the peak season for HFMD is usually from May to July and another peak may also occur from October to December every year. This year, an upward trend in some surveillance indicators for HFMD activity was observed between June and August. As of 21 August, the CHP recorded a total of 79 HFMD outbreaks involving schools this year.

HFMD is mainly transmitted by contact with an infected person’s nose or throat discharges, saliva, fluid from broken vesicles or stool, or after touching contaminated objects. As the viruses can easily spread through close person-to-person contact among students and the activity of HFMD may increase between October and December every year, schools need to be cautious that outbreaks of HFMD will occur after the start of the new school year.

Maintaining good personal and environmental hygiene is the most important measure to prevent HFMD, including performing hand hygiene frequently and washing hands with liquid soap and water, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, toys and shared items, etc. To prevent the spread of HFMD within school settings, affected children should remain at home and refrain from attending school until they have completely recovered.

Other matters to note

To prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases, students / staff members who develop fever, acute respiratory symptoms, diarrhea, vomiting and rash etc. should not attend school and should seek medical advice. Besides, schools should take measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, e.g., remind students / 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” at: https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guidelines_on_prevention_of_communicable_diseases_in_schools_kindergartens_kindergartens_cum_child_care-centres_child_are_centres.pdf

In addition, schools should set up a mechanism for collecting personal particulars and contact information of students and staff members. They should also inform parents at the beginning of the new school year that the conditions and

contact details of students / children will be released to the CHP and other relevant departments for disease control purpose when necessary.

If you suspect any outbreaks occurring in your institution, please report to the Central Notification Office of the CHP as early as possible for prompt epidemiological investigations (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770; Email: diseases@dh.gov.hk). The CHP will give advice on the management of the cases and take appropriate control measures.

For the latest information on communicable diseases, please visit the CHP's webpages below:

- Chikungunya fever
(<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/109029.html>)
- Dengue fever
(<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/38847.html>)
- Seasonal influenza
(<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/14843.html>)
- HFMD and EV71 infection
(<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/16354.html>)

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. Albert AU)

For Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health