



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

本局檔號 Our Ref : EDB(SDCT)3/PRO/10/1/1(3)

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9 September 2019

To: Supervisors/Principals of all Schools

Dear Supervisor/Principal,

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

The new school year has just started. To facilitate schools' preparation of preventive measures against the spread of various communicable diseases such as dengue fever, seasonal influenza, chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD), and scarlet fever, schools are advised to stay vigilant and refer to the letter issued to all schools dated 6 September 2019 by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (Appendix I). Schools should put in place the various hygienic and preventive measures against communicable diseases and take caution in the following:

Guard against dengue fever

- In view of the latest situation of dengue fever in Hong Kong, schools should put in place CHP's suggested measures to prevent this disease from spreading.
- Schools are advised to appoint designated staff for mosquito prevention and control in the school premises. Please refer to the guidelines published by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, which can be accessed at:

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

Maintaining a clean and hygienic school environment

- Always keep the school environment clean and hygienic.

- To maintain good indoor ventilation. If air-conditioning is used, the air filters should be cleaned and replaced regularly. The system should also be properly maintained.

Disseminating messages on prevention of communicable diseases and reviewing contingency measures

- For more effective prevention against the spread of communicable diseases in the campus, schools should assign designated staff or a crisis management team to coordinate and oversee matters relating to the hygienic conditions of the school environment and to brief students/staff and parents on the relevant preventive measures.
- Schools should observe the “Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools/ Kindergartens/ Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres/ Child Care Centres” issued by CHP to implement the preventive measures properly and review the contingency measures from time to time so that such measures can be implemented immediately when needed. Schools can get access to the aforesaid Guidelines via the following path:

EDB Homepage (www.edb.gov.hk)> School Administration and Management> Administration> About School> Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools> B. Guidelines/ Useful Materials

- Schools should set up a mechanism for collecting the personal and contact information of students/staff members and notify parents that where necessary, information and contact details of students suspected of being infected would be released to CHP or relevant departments for effective implementation of control measures against communicable diseases.
- Schools should remind students/staff to pay attention to personal hygiene and assist in promoting health messages on prevention of communicable diseases. Schools can download the relevant health reference/promotional materials and video clips, etc. from the CHP’s website (<http://www.chp.gov.hk>). For enquiries, please contact the Central Health Education Unit of the Department of Health during office hours (Tel No.: 2572 1476).
- Schools should enlist parents’ co-operation in paying attention to students’ personal and environmental hygiene so as to tie in with the preventive measures taken by schools. A sample letter to parents is enclosed for reference (Appendix II).

Early reporting of suspected outbreak cases of communicable diseases

- If a suspected outbreak of communicable disease occurs in school or an increasing trend or unusual situation in the number of persons taking sick leave with similar symptoms or due to the same infectious disease (for example, three or more students in the same class develop symptoms of respiratory tract infections or two or more students in the same class develop symptoms of HFMD in succession within a short time), schools should report the case to the Central Notification Office of CHP immediately (Fax No.: 2477 2770; Tel No.: 2477 2772) by completing the “Suspected Infectious Disease Outbreak in School/ Kindergarten /KG-cum-CCC /Child Care

Centre Notification Form” to facilitate CHP’s early epidemiological investigation and outbreak control. Schools should also forward a copy of the Notification Form to their respective Regional Education Offices (REO) /Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres (JOKC).

- Schools should also keep in close contact with CHP for their keeping track of the latest communicable disease outbreak situation of schools.

Observing guidelines in handling class suspension matters

- When schools consider school-based class suspension on the ground of outbreak of communicable disease according to Education Bureau Circular No. 9/2015 “Handling Emergency Situations in Schools”, they are required to consult the officer of CHP and confirm the situation with the respective REO/ JOKC before arriving at any decision. Taking into consideration the situation at the time, including the number of children affected, severely ill or hospitalized, the progression of the outbreak and the effectiveness of control measures, CHP would advise schools whether class suspension is needed. Schools should maintain close contact with CHP and this Bureau in this respect so that appropriate advice and support could be rendered.

This Bureau will continue to keep in close contact with CHP and release the latest information of communicable diseases to schools through the Communication and Delivery System or emails. For enquiries, please contact your respective Senior School Development Officers/ Senior Services Officers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K K LEE', with a stylized flourish at the end.

(K K LEE)

for Secretary for Education

監測及流行病學處



**Surveillance
And
Epidemiology
Branch**

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6 September 2019

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge / Teacher,

Stay Vigilant Against Communicable Diseases in the New School Year

As the new school year has started, we would like to take this opportunity to urge you to maintain vigilance against the following communicable diseases at kindergartens (KGs), child care centres (CCCs), and schools.

Dengue fever (DF)

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 disease is transmitted by mosquitoes. 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 5 September, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) recorded 138 DF cases this year, as compared with 100 cases recorded in the same period last year. All the cases recorded in 2019 were imported cases.

We would like to seek your help in the prevention of DF by taking part in mosquito control actions and adopting personal protective measures against mosquito bites. The following preventive measures should be taken 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 tightly all water containers, wells and water storage tanks;
- Keep all drains free from blockage; and



衛生防護中心乃衛生署
轄下執行疾病預防
及控制的專業架構
The Centre for Health
Protection is a
professional arm of the
Department of Health for
disease prevention
and control

- Top up all defective ground surfaces to prevent the accumulation of stagnant water.

Staff and students are also advised to protect themselves from mosquito bites by taking the following measures:

- Use mosquito screens or bed nets when the room is not air-conditioned; and
- Place anti-mosquito devices near entrances such as windows and doors to prevent mosquitoes from entering indoor.

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.

Seasonal influenza and influenza vaccination

Influenza viruses mainly spread through droplets when infected people cough, sneeze or talk. The infection may also spread by direct contact with the secretions of infected persons. Symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle pain, fatigue and headache; some may also have vomiting and diarrhoea. The surveillance data of the CHP showed that the overall local influenza activity remained at a low level (as of 31 August), but outbreaks of influenza-like illness in schools may increase after the start of the new school year.

Schools and parents should continue to stay vigilant against influenza as it can cause serious illness even in healthy children. As vaccination is a safe and effective means against serious influenza infection, all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications are recommended to receive influenza vaccine to protect themselves against seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as related hospitalisations and deaths. The CHP has produced a series of animated videos to facilitate members of the public, including students, to learn more about seasonal influenza vaccine. The videos are accessible in the following link: <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/101354.html>.

The Government has been providing free and subsidised season influenza vaccination (SIV) to children aged between six months and under 12 years through the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) and the Vaccination Subsidy

Scheme (VSS) respectively. In 2019/20, VSS and GVP will be launched on 9 and 23 October 2019 respectively. For more details, please refer to the webpage (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/18877.html>).

In addition, the Government will regularise the SIV school outreach by launching the 2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) (the Programme) to cover more primary schools and, in a pilot basis, to extend the Programme to KGs, KG-cum-CCCs and CCCs. Vaccination will be provided by outreach vaccination teams of DH or Public-Private-Partnership doctors/ medical organisations.

Application for primary schools has been closed. Results of matching schools with outreach vaccination teams were released in June 2019. KGs, KG-cum-CCCs and CCCs can still apply now by choosing a doctor/medical organisation from the list posted on the CHP website (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/101413.html>) or accepting the offer of the private doctor/medical organisation as matched by DH, and inform DH at least 8 weeks before the outreach vaccination activity.

If your school will not join the 2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge), you may consider VSS School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed) to arrange vaccination outreach for school children. Please refer to the CHP webpage (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/100634.html>) for details of the two programmes.

School closure related to influenza outbreaks

The CHP's Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases has recommended that closure of an individual school with influenza or influenza-like illness outbreaks may be considered taking reference from the following indicators: (i) any death of healthy children in the school due to influenza; (ii) two or more children requiring intensive care unit admission due to influenza; or (iii) the influenza-like illness attack rate among children is 20% or more. In addition, factors including the number of staff affected (which may potentially affect operation of the school), the epidemic trend of the outbreak and the effectiveness of control measures should also be taken into consideration. Please refer to the relevant section (5.7.4 on page 32) in the **“Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools /Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres /Child Care Centres”** for details

(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).

Chickenpox

Chickenpox is a highly communicable viral disease, and is the most commonly reported notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong. There are two seasonal peaks: the number of chickenpox cases usually starts to rise in October and peaks in December and January; while a smaller peak is also observed in June and July. Institutional outbreaks of chickenpox occur commonly in the community with the majority in pre-primary institutions (including KGs, CCCs, etc.) as well as primary and secondary schools.

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD)

HFMD is a common disease in children caused by enteroviruses such as coxsackie viruses and enterovirus 71 (EV71). In Hong Kong, the usual peak season for HFMD and EV71 infection is from May to July and a smaller peak may also occur from October to December. In the 2019 summer peak, the HFMD activity started to increase in May and has maintained at a high level throughout July and August. As of 31 August this year, the number of institutional outbreaks of HFMD recorded by CHP was higher, while that of EV71 infections was lower than that in the same period of last year. It is expected that outbreaks of HFMD in schools will continue to occur after the start of the new school year.

Scarlet fever (SF)

SF is a bacterial infection caused by Group A Streptococcus. It mostly affects children. SF is transmitted through either respiratory droplets or direct contact with infected respiratory secretions. The local SF activity is usually higher from November to March and from May to June. It is expected to increase after the start of the new school year.

To prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases, students/children who develop skin rash, fever, acute respiratory symptoms, diarrhea or vomiting are strongly advised not to attend school and should seek medical advice. Besides, KGs, CCCs 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 the CHP 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

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). The CHP will give advice on the management of the cases and take appropriate control measures. Moreover, KGs, CCCs and schools should set up a mechanism for collecting personal particulars and contact information of students/children 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.

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

- Dengue fever (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/38847.html>);
- Influenza (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/14843.html>);
- Chickenpox (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/15.html>);
- HFMD and EV71 infection (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/16354.html>);
- and
- Scarlet fever (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/23359.html>).

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. S K CHUANG)

For Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

[Sample Letter to Parents]

(This sample letter is for reference only. Individual schools should edit the sample letter in the light of their own situation.)

xx September 2019

Dear Parents,

1. As advised by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH), outbreaks of communicable diseases such as dengue fever, seasonal influenza, chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and scarlet fever may occur in institutions and schools from time to time.
2. Therefore, before the commencement of the new school year, we have thoroughly cleaned and disinfected the school premises. We would also urge all students/staff members to pay attention to their personal hygiene and environmental hygiene of the school.
3. For students' health sake, we would appeal to you that in addition to maintaining a clean and healthy household environment, please remind your children to constantly observe personal hygiene and keep the school environment clean. Please take note of the following measures:
 - In view of the latest situation of dengue fever, preventive measures should be taken to protect against mosquito bites. Please refer to the guidelines published by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, which can be accessed at: https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pestcontrol/library/pdf_pest_control/mosquito_school.pdf.
 - Seek medical advice as soon as possible if your children develop symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting and skin rash. If symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough or influenza are developed, they should put on a mask immediately and seek medical care promptly. Please also notify the school and let the children stay at home for rest until symptoms have improved and fever has subsided for at least two days, or follow the medical advice on sick leave, whichever is longer.
 - Children with HFMD should stay at home for rest until fever has subsided and all the vesicles have dried and crusted. As an extra precaution, if enterovirus 71 is confirmed to be the pathogen, children should take 2 more weeks of sick leave after all vesicles have dried up.
 - Inform the school immediately if children are sick or have been admitted to hospital for surveillance. Such information and contact details of students would be reported to CHP or relevant government departments on a need basis to help institute effective control measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
 - Co-operate with the school by picking up children not feeling well from school and consulting the doctor immediately.
 - Provide children with handkerchiefs or tissue papers and remind them not to share towels or tissue papers with others.

- Remind children to keep hands clean, cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of used tissue paper properly.
 - Parents should measure children's temperature before they leave home for school.
 - When schools are advised by CHP to implement the additional measure on temperature monitoring, we will inform you of the details of the arrangements.
4. At the beginning of the new school year, we have urged drivers and attendants of school buses/nanny vans not to drive/board these vehicles and make appropriate arrangements if they have a fever or any symptoms of communicable diseases. They should also inform the school and parents of the situation immediately,
 5. In case of any students being absent due to sickness, we would provide learning support for them so that their learning progress would not be affected.
 6. We would like to appeal to parents again for co-operation in maintaining a clean and healthy household environment. Please also remind your children to pay attention to personal hygiene and to take all necessary preventive measures against communicable diseases.

Signature of Principal
Principal of (school name)