

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (11) in in DH SEB CD/8/50/1

22 June 2011

Dear Principals / Persons-in-charge / Teachers,

**Be vigilant against Scarlet Fever**

Further to our letter of 9 June, I would like to update you on the latest situation of scarlet fever in Hong Kong. The activity of scarlet fever is currently at a high level in Hong Kong.

In 2011 (up to 21 June), 466 cases have been reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), which exceeded the annual number of cases recorded in the past 10 years. Their age ranged from 1 month to 37 years (median: 6 years). Majority of cases (92%) are children less than 10 years old. So far, eight institutional outbreaks were recorded in 2011 (up to 21 June), with four occurring in kindergartens/child care centres, three in primary schools and one in a special child care centre, affecting a total of 26 persons. Size of the outbreaks at schools ranged from two to seven people. Two fatal cases affecting a 5 year-old boy and a 7 year-old girl were recorded in June 2011. The school attended by the five year old boy also had a chickenpox outbreak and was advised to suspend class for one week.

Scarlet fever is an infection caused by the bacterium Group A Streptococcus and prompt antibiotic treatment is effective against scarlet fever. Patients suspected to have scarlet fever should seek prompt medical consultation and take antibiotics according to the doctor's instruction.

Scarlet fever usually presents as fever, sore throat and skin rash. The rash appears on the first or second day of illness over trunk and neck. Then it spreads to the limbs especially on axilla, elbow and groin. The rash is characterized by a "sandpaper" texture. It subsides after one week and is followed by skin peeling over palms and soles. Scarlet fever can sometimes be complicated with heart disease, kidney disease, and rarely toxic shock syndrome.



Patients usually acquire the infection through either respiratory route or direct contact with infected respiratory secretions. Incubation period is around 1-3 days. We would like to solicit your support in implementing the following measures to prevent any potential spread of scarlet fever in your school. For prevention of scarlet fever the following measures are recommended:

- Children suffering from fever, sore throat or skin rash should be refrained from school and consult a doctor. They should not attend school until they fully recover or as instructed by the doctor ;
- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, e.g., after sneezing;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Keep good ventilation;

If you notice two or more students or staff with symptoms of scarlet fever, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772. CHP will give advice on the management of such cases and appropriate control measures. In special circumstances, CHP may advise individual school with scarlet fever case(s) to suspend classes, taking into account the epidemiological assessment such as size of the outbreak and occurrence of fatal cases

Since 21 June 2011, the CHP has been uploading a daily update on the latest situation of scarlet fever on the CHP website. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at <http://www.chp.gov.hk>.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. Christine WONG)  
For Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health