



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.: (136) in EDB(COA)ADM/60/1/1(7)

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29 August 2012

To: Supervisors/Principals of all Schools

Dear Supervisor/Principal,

Stay Vigilant to Guard Against Communicable Diseases

The new school year is approaching. To facilitate schools' preparation for preventive measures against the spread of various communicable diseases such as influenza, respiratory illness, chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and norovirus infection, schools are advised to make reference to the letter issued to all schools dated 27 August 2012 by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (Appendix I). Schools should stay vigilant and put in place the various hygienic and preventive measures against communicable diseases, including the following:

Maintaining a clean and hygienic school environment

- Cleanse and disinfect the school premises thoroughly before commencement of the new school term and keep the school environment clean and hygienic.
- Maintain good indoor ventilation. If air-conditioning is used, the system should be properly maintained to ensure adequate provision of fresh air. Air filters should be cleaned and replaced regularly.

Disseminating messages on prevention of communicable diseases and reviewing contingency measures

- For more effective implementation of preventive measures against the spread of communicable diseases in the campus, schools should assign designated staff or a crisis management team to coordinate or oversee matters relating to the hygienic conditions of school environment and to brief students/staff and parents on the relevant preventive measures.

- Schools should review from time to time the contingency measures so as to get well prepared for implementation of various contingency measures in case of class suspension due to the outbreak of any communicable disease. 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 to be infected would be released to CHP and relevant departments for effective implementation of control measures against communicable diseases.
- 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).
- Enlist parents' co-operation in paying attention to students' personal hygiene 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 influenza outbreak occurs in school or an increasing trend or unusual situation in the number of persons taking sick leave due to the same infectious disease or similar symptoms is noticed (for example, three or more students in the same class develop symptoms of respiratory tract infections within a short time; or two or more students in the same class develop symptoms of hand, foot and mouth disease within seven days), schools should report the case to the Central Notification Office of CHP (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 to conduct an 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).
- Besides, schools should keep in close contact with CHP for their keeping track of the latest communicable disease outbreak situation of the schools.

Observing guidelines in handling class suspension matters

- If schools consider that the increasing trend of infected cases might warrant class suspension, they should consult the responsible officer of CHP and confirm the situation with the respective School Development Sections / JOKC before arriving at any decision. Taking into consideration the situation at the time, including factors such as the number of children affected, severely ill or hospitalized, the progression of the outbreak and the effectiveness of control measures, CHP would advise schools on whether there is a need for class suspension. 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 on communicable diseases to schools. For enquiries, please contact your respective Senior School Development Officers/Senior Services Officers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alice YU', written in a cursive style.

(Miss Alice YU)

for Secretary for Education

監測及流行病學處



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection

保障市民健康
Protecting Hong Kong's health

Surveillance
And
Epidemiology
Branch

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (8) in DH SEB CD/13/1

27th August 2012

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge / Teacher,

**Stay Vigilant Against Communicable Diseases
in Coming School Year**

The new school year is approaching. I would like to take this opportunity to urge your vigilance against communicable diseases at child care centres, kindergartens and schools.

Norovirus associated acute gastroenteritis outbreaks usually occur in November till January in the following year. This year, an early increase in the number of norovirus associated outbreaks has been recorded by Centre for Health Protection (CHP) since July. There were 11 and 24 norovirus associated outbreaks recorded in July and August (as of August 22) respectively as compared to none to three outbreaks in preceding three months. Please maintain good standard of personal, food and environmental hygiene with particular attention to handling of vomitus and excreta to prevent acute gastroenteritis outbreaks in schools and institutions.

Influenza in Hong Kong is usually more common in periods from January to March and from July to August. In 2012, the influenza peak season has lasted for about six months since taking off in mid-January. Although the latest data collected through various surveillance systems show that the current influenza activity has returned to baseline level, schools and parents should continue staying vigilant against respiratory illness and outbreaks, especially for those young children who are incapable of taking proper personal care.



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

香港九龍亞皆老街 147C 號 3 樓
3/F, 147C Argyle Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Given influenza vaccines are safe and effective and that serious influenza infection can occur even in healthy children, parents can consult their family doctors to arrange annual seasonal influenza vaccination for their children for personal protection. Starting from 24 September 2012, children between the age of six months and less than six years will be eligible to receive subsidised influenza vaccination from enrolled private doctors participating in Government's vaccination subsidy schemes. For other vaccination under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme, the Maternal and Child Health Centres and the School Immunisation Teams under the Department of Health will arrange vaccination for children according to the programme. Parents can also consult their family doctors for these vaccinations.

Apart from the above, outbreaks of other communicable diseases, like chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease, may also occur in institutions. To prevent outbreaks, students who develop symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting, skin rash, fever, or influenza-like illness are strongly advised not to attend school and should seek medical advice. Schools should always take precautions against communicable diseases outbreaks. For details, please read "**Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools /Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres**" which is accessible at www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/School_full_eng_20110822.pdf.

If you suspect any outbreaks occurring in your institution, please report to the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at fax: 2477 2770 or tel: 2477 2772. Schools should set up mechanism for collecting personal and contact information of students and staff members and notify parents that, when necessary, information and contact details of students suspected to be infected will be released to CHP and other relevant departments for effective communicable disease control. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at www.chp.gov.hk.

Yours sincerely,



(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 2012

Dear Parents,

1. As advised by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH), outbreaks of communicable diseases such as influenza, respiratory illness, chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and norovirus infection 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:
 - Seek medical advice as soon as possible if your children develop symptoms of diarrhoea, 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 be excluded from schools until fever has subsided and all the vesicles have dried and crusted. As an extra precaution, children with EV 71 infection should not go to school for another two weeks after all symptoms subsided.
 - 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.
 - Before sending children to school, measure their body temperature, record the reading and sign the temperature record sheet which should be handed to the school every day. Attached please find a copy of the "Temperature Record Sheet".

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 influenza symptoms. 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)