

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (20) in DH/SEB/CD/8/17/1

來函檔號 Your Ref. :

電話 Tel. :

傳真 Fax No. :

5 May 2008

To Principals / Persons-in-charge,

Recent rise in Hand-foot-mouth Disease (HFMD) and enterovirus 71 (EV71) activity

Further to my letter alerting you on the HFMD situations on 31 March, I would like to urge you to ensure adequate preventive measures are in place to prevent any potential spread of HFMD, especially those caused by EV71, in your school.

So far, this year, we have recorded 20 institutional outbreaks of HFMD, with 7 outbreaks occurring in the past four weeks. Most occurred in kindergarten and child care centres. We have also detected more EV71 cases, a total of 10 patients so far, as compared with the same period in the past three years. Increase in EV71 activity, especially severe cases, in neighbouring areas, including Singapore, Taiwan, and some areas in the Mainland also deserves great attention.

HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. The main symptoms of HFMD are fever, sore throat and skin rash over the hands and feet. Although the illness is self-limiting in most cases, some cases may be caused by EV71 virus and may be associated with complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis. No specific treatment is available for HFMD. Good hygiene practices are the most important measures to prevent HFMD and EV71 infection.

To prevent HFMD outbreak and EV71 infection in your institution, I would recommend you taking the following steps:

1. Maintain good communication with parents and help them to understand the need to keep children at home for rest when they develop fever and rash. Advise them to see doctor promptly if they develop symptoms suggestive of HFMD.



2. Encourage staff to screen for children with symptoms before they enter the school. Children with HFMD should be excluded from schools until fever has subsided and all the vesicles have dried and crusted.
3. Supervise children on personal hygiene practices especially on how to wash hands properly with liquid soap before meals and after going to toilet, cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, and proper disposal of nasal and mouth discharge.
4. Keep the environment clean and hygienic, and follow the Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Child Care Centres, Kindergartens, and Schools which is available at <http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/Guild-Booklet-eng.pdf>
5. Last but not least, please also incorporate in your health education to children that, when the children are having holidays or meeting with relatives outside Hong Kong, they should also remember to keep their hands clean and avoid touching vesicles on hands or other bodily areas of other sick children.

If you suspect a HFMD outbreak (i.e. two or more children in the same class / activity group develop HFMD within a period of 7 days), 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 outbreaks and take appropriate control measures. During outbreaks, please maintain close communication with parents on the condition of the children and report to CHP if the affected children have been admitted to hospitals.

We may consider to advise schools affected to suspend classes for a period of 14 days when situation warrants. Examples of such scenarios include occurrence of further cases in an institution attended by a confirmed EV 71 case after stepping up control measures, OR occurrence of an EV71 case who is suffering from severe complication and the institution the child is attending has an associated HFMD outbreak.

As the virus may be excreted in stools for some weeks and EV71 is associated with a higher risk of complications, as an extra precaution, a child who has EV71 infection is advised not to go to school for another two weeks after all symptoms have subsided.



For more information, please visit the website of CHP at <http://www.chp.gov.hk>

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

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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*