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25 September 2009

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

Influenza-like-illness outbreaks in schools and pre-primary institutions

In the new school year, many schools have encountered outbreaks of influenza-like illness (ILI). Since 1 September 2009, a total of 853 ILI outbreaks in schools and pre-school institutions were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) (as of 24 September). So far, CHP has advised 42 schools/pre-school institutions to suspend classes to prevent the spread of influenza. I would like to take this opportunity to urge you to keep vigilance against influenza at your school/institution.

You are reminded to continue temperature checking for students and monitor the sick leave pattern and report promptly to the Central Notification Office of the CHP (Tel: 2477-2772; Fax: 2477-2770) if there is a suspected outbreak of respiratory infection in your school/institution. For effective implementation of control measures, please facilitate CHP's investigation by supplying the relevant details of the affected students and staff to CHP in a timely manner, including their reported symptoms, onset date and contact information as staff from CHP may seek clarification from parents of the clinical condition of individual students if necessary.

If your school/institution considers that an outbreak may warrant class suspension, before arriving at any decision, please consult CHP and confirm the situation with the respective School Development Section/Joint Office for Pre-primary Services prior to notifying parents of the related arrangements.



Human swine influenza (HSI) now accounts for the majority of ILI cases. Most healthy persons suffered from HSI develop an illness consistent with seasonal influenza and recover completely within a few days. Testing of individual patients for HSI is therefore not warranted except for special indications. The Designated Flu Clinics and Accident and Emergency Departments under the Hospital Authority now will only offer testing to those patients who are clinically indicated. Healthy school children with mild symptoms of influenza, or who appear to be recovering from influenza is not one of the targeted groups for laboratory testing for HSI. Nonetheless, please remind parents of sick students that they should bring their child to seek medical advice. Parents should also be reminded not to bring sick children to school until symptoms have improved and fever has subsided for at least 2 days, or follow medical advice, whichever is longer.

Schools should update parents regularly of the latest outbreak situation in the school. The “Guideline on Prevention of Human Swine Influenza for Commencement of the New School Year (Revised September 2009)” has been updated accordingly and is available at the following web page: (http://www.chp.gov.hk/view_content.asp?lang=en&info_id=16615). For the latest information on HSI, please see our weekly “Swine and Seasonal Flu Monitor” at the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk).

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

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