

3. General guidelines on prevention of communicable diseases

Building up the body immunity by having a balanced diet in accordance with the food pyramid, adequate rest and sleep, regular exercise and not smoking is vital to the prevention of communicable diseases. Moreover, good personal, food and environmental hygiene should be observed. Vaccination can provide extra protection against some communicable diseases.

3.1 Personal hygiene

Since many communicable diseases are transmitted through contact or droplet, performing hand hygiene properly and maintaining respiratory hygiene are two prerequisites for the prevention of such diseases. School/centre staff should not only observe their personal hygiene practices but also supervise and provide support for the children to develop the good practices.

3.1.1. Hand hygiene

- Hand hygiene is a basic infection control measure to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. The common hand hygiene practices include hand washing and proper use of alcohol-based handrub.*
- Researches show that washing hands properly is the most effective way of preventing transmission of communicable diseases. Staff members who have neglected the importance of proper handwashing when performing care often become carriers of different infective agents and lead to cross-infection in the schools/centres. Therefore, both hands should be washed with liquid soap before and after caring for each child.
- Staff should follow the advice and procedures in Appendix 6 and supervise children to perform proper hand hygiene in schools/centres. They should pay particular attention to the following points:
 - When hands are visibly soiled, handwashing should be performed.
 - When hands are not visibly soiled, application of alcohol handrub is equally effective.
 - Instruct children to use alcohol handrub properly.
 - Keep alcohol handrub out of the reach of children to prevent unsupervised use.
 - Wearing gloves can never replace good hand hygiene. Always practise proper hand hygiene after taking off the gloves.

- Improper hand drying will also result in cross-infection to others through contaminated hands. Both disposable paper towel and hand dryer are proper means for hand drying. If towels are used, they should never be shared and should be hung up immediately after use and washed thoroughly at least once a day.
- Provide adequate hand hygiene facilities in the schools/centres.

** Schools/centres should refer to instructions on the container for proper usage and storage of alcohol handrub. According to the advice of Fire Services Department, each school /centre should not keep more than a total of 20 litres of alcohol-based liquid. To reduce fire risk, alcohol-based liquid (including alcohol handrub) in excess of 20 litres should be stored in an approved Cat. 5 Dangerous Goods Store.*

3.1.2 Respiratory hygiene

Staff should observe themselves and instruct the children to maintain respiratory hygiene practices in accordance to the following advice:

- Do not spit.
- Cover both the nose and mouth with a handkerchief or tissue paper when coughing or sneezing.
- Wrap up sputum with tissue paper and discard it into garbage bins with lids or flush them away in the toilet.
- Wash hands immediately after contacting respiratory secretions or touching objects contaminated with respiratory secretions.
- Put on a surgical mask for those with respiratory infection symptoms (Appendix 7).

3.2 Food hygiene

3.2.1 Choice of food

- Buy fresh meat and vegetables.
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers.
- Do not buy packaged food without proper labelling, beyond its expiry date or with damaged packages.
- Do not buy ready-to-eat food and drinks that are displayed with raw products.
- Do not buy food which looks, smells or tastes abnormal.
- Do not buy unpasteurised products like raw milk.
- Do not buy excessive food to avoid problems due to prolonged storage.

3.2.2 Preparation of food

- Wash hands properly before preparing food.
- Wear mask, washable or disposable apron and cap during handling cooked food.
- Cover wounds on hands with waterproof dressing to prevent passing infective agents from wounds to food.
- Wash food thoroughly, and scrub with a brush when appropriate.
- Handle and store raw food and cooked food separately. Use separate knives and chopping boards for each to avoid cross-contamination.
- Discard the outer leaves of vegetables and immerse the vegetables in water for 1 hour before washing to eliminate possible pesticide residues.
- Frozen meat or fish must be thawed completely before cooking.
- Reheat cooked food from the refrigerator thoroughly before consumption.
- Cook food thoroughly before consumption.
- Sample food with a clean spoon, not with fingers.
- Do not touch cooked food with bare hands.
- Consume food as soon as it is cooked.
- Do not prepare too much food at one time to avoid wastage or over-stocking.
- Do not handle food if suffering from illnesses such as fever, diarrhoea and vomiting.

3.2.3 Storage of food

- Store food in well-covered containers.
- Never leave perishable food in room temperature.
- Store perishable food in the refrigerator immediately after purchase.
- Before refrigeration, pack the food into smaller portions if it is not intended for use in one go.
- Store surplus food in the refrigerator if retention is needed.
- Make sure that the refrigerator is clean and functioning properly, and clean it at regular intervals. Keep the temperature inside the

refrigerator at or below 4°C and the freezer at or below -18°C. Each refrigerator should have a temperature log book with temperature recorded regularly.

- Avoid overcrowding to maintain proper temperature inside the refrigerator.
- Do not wrap food with newspaper, unclean paper or coloured plastic bags.

Schools/centres should also follow the Five Keys to Food Safety developed by the Centre for Food Safety, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in accordance with the recommendation given by the World Health Organization to handle food properly ([Appendix 8](#)).

3.3 Environmental hygiene

Since infective agents can survive in the environment for a period of time, it is essential to observe proper environmental hygiene.

3.3.1 Choice of disinfectants

- Different types of disinfectants can be used to clean the environment. Household bleach, which normally contains 5.25% hypochlorite solution, is the most convenient and effective disinfectant. The 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (5.25%) is sufficient for general cleaning purpose and 1 in 49 diluted household bleach should be used for places contaminated with respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta. Please refer to [Appendix 9](#) for procedures of preparing/using diluted bleaches.
- Besides, many detergents in the market are claimed to have a disinfectant composition. Purchasers should check the content and note the directions for use because the effectiveness of different disinfectants will be different.
- Since household bleach contains hypochlorite solution, care should be taken to avoid its use in metal surfaces as chlorine is corrosive to metal. The 70% alcohol can be used if disinfection of metal surfaces is required.

3.3.2 General cleansing

- Maintain good indoor ventilation, open windows wide and turn on fans or exhaust fans. Make sure air-conditioning systems are well-maintained. Clean air-filters regularly and keep them clean.
- Clean and disinfect the school premises including classrooms, kitchen canteen, toilets, bathrooms, and school buses with 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 99 parts of water), wait until the disinfectant dries up, then rinse with water and keep dry.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as furniture, toys and commonly shared items (such as computer keyboards) at least daily by using appropriate disinfectant (e.g. 1 in 99 diluted household bleach by mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 99 parts of water for non-metallic surfaces; or 70% alcohol for metallic surfaces), leave for 15-30 minutes, and then rinse with water and keep dry.
- Use absorbent disposable towels to wipe away obvious contaminants such as respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, then disinfect the surface and neighbouring areas with appropriate disinfectant (e.g. 1 in 49 diluted household bleach by mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 49 parts of water for non-metallic surfaces; or 70% alcohol for metallic surfaces), leave for 15-30 minutes and then rinse with water and keep dry.

3.3.3 Kitchen hygiene

- Keep the kitchen clean. Wash the exhaust fan and range hood regularly.
- Store eating utensils in a clean cupboard.
- Keep worktops in the kitchen clean.
- Keep the floor dry after cleaning to prevent slip.
- Do not store personal items such as clothes or shoes in the kitchen.
- Cover garbage bins properly to avoid breeding of mosquitoes, cockroaches, flies and rodents.

3.3.4 Toilet and bathroom hygiene

- Keep toilets, changing rooms, and bathrooms clean and hygienic.
- Provide liquid soap and disposable tissue towels or hand dryers for hand washing.
- Ensure the flushing system of the toilet is in proper function.
- Make sure that the drain pipes are built with U-shaped water traps and do not alter the pipelines without authorisation.
- Pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet regularly (about once a week) so as to maintain the water column in the pipe as water lock to prevent the spread of micro-organisms.
- Make sure that the soil pipes are unobstructed and the sewage drains are functioning properly without leakage so as to avoid breeding of infective agents.

3.3.5 Waste disposal

- Cover garbage bins with lids.
- Wrap up rubbish properly before discarding it into garbage bins with lids.
- Empty garbage bins at least once a day.
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling garbage.

3.3.6 Cleansing of utensils

- Rinse floor mop, wiper or other cleaning utensils with water to remove solid or bulky waste if any.
- Disinfect such utensils by immersing them in 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (5.25%) for 30 minutes.
- Then wash with detergents and clean water.
- Re-use after drying out.

3.3.7 Miscellaneous

- Maintain proper function of the drinking fountain and instruct children to use it properly according to the guidelines for using drinking fountain in schools/centres ([Appendix 10](#)).
- Clean and examine children's lockers regularly to avoid collecting food remnants and hence the breeding of pests and rodents.
- If beds are provided, keep appropriate distance between beds or groups of beds (not less than 1 metre) to reduce the chance of transmission of infective agents by droplets.
- Empty water in the saucers underneath flower pots and change water in vases at least once a week. Top up all defective ground surfaces to prevent accumulation of stagnant water and breeding of mosquitoes. Avoid stacking of unnecessary articles to prevent rodent infestation.
- Commence clean-up actions immediately if there are any signs of pest or rodent infestation such as excreta of rats, cockroaches, mosquitoes and flies. In case of need, call the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department hotline at 2868 0000 or the relevant departments for assistance.
- It is not advisable to keep pets like dogs, cats, poultry or birds in schools/centres.

3.4 Vaccination

Remind parents to vaccinate their children according to the childhood immunisation programme ([Appendix 11](#)) recommended by CHP. Diseases which can be prevented by vaccination include measles, mumps, rubella, poliomyelitis, whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus, tuberculosis and hepatitis B.