

Management of Avian Influenza in Schools

School management should take appropriate measures to ensure maximum protection of students and staff.

(A) Acquire an understanding of seasonal influenza / avian influenza / influenza pandemic

- INFLUENZA or 'flu' can be caused by different types of influenza viruses. It is important to differentiate the three different entities of seasonal influenza, avian influenza and influenza pandemic. Influenza spreads mainly by respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing or contact with contaminated surfaces.
 - SEASONAL INFLUENZA occurs in human populations. In Hong Kong, influenza peaks in January to March and July to August every year. The commonest circulating strains are influenza A (H1N1 and H3N2) and influenza B.
 - AVIAN INFLUENZA normally infects birds, including poultry. Possible strains include influenza A (H5, H7 and H9) viruses. Human cases of avian influenza have been reported, mostly resulting from close contact with sick birds. Efficient spread between human beings is not known.
 - INFLUENZA PANDEMIC occurs when a new viral strain emerges and spreads rapidly among the human race which does not possess immunity to the disease. The new viral strain may originate from a human influenza virus or an avian influenza virus. As large numbers of people will fall ill or die from it, great human, social and economic loss will result. Many people would not be able to work due to the sickness, having to stay at home to care for the sick, or upon Government's advice to reduce social contact. Community and economic activities will have to be scaled down.
- According to the World Health Organization, the incubation period for avian influenza H5N1 is 7 days. After being infected, persons may develop symptoms in seven days, but they may start spreading the disease one day before symptoms develop.
- The initial clinical presentation of avian influenza is like other types of influenza, which may include fever, cough, sore throat, headache and muscle ache. However, avian influenza is more often associated with a history of travel to a place with affected poultry and/or contact with sick birds or related laboratory specimens. Some avian flu patients may also present with shortness of breath and diarrhoea. Avian flu may progress to develop high fever, chest infection, lung failure, multi-organ failure and death.

(B) Get prepared for avian influenza

- Ensure a clean and hygienic school environment.
 - ◆ regular disinfection of school equipment, door knobs and lift buttons with 1:99 diluted household bleach (one part of 5.25% hypochlorite solution in 99 parts of water);
 - ◆ cleaning of floor, doors and windows regularly;
 - ◆ proper maintenance of toilet facilities and floor drains including adequate supply of liquid soap, disposable towels or hand-dryers; and
 - ◆ maintaining good indoor ventilation, including opening windows as widely and as many as possible and/or well-maintained air conditioning system together with turning on exhaust fans at the same time.
- Support students and staff in adopting good personal (e.g. frequent handwashing) and environmental hygiene (e.g. provision of liquid soap, lidded rubbish bin and regular refuse disposal).
- Relieve staff members from work and advise students to stay at home if they are sick. Offer surgical masks to them if they have influenza-like symptoms while they arrange to see a doctor.
- Keep a clear staff and student sickness record.
- Study the Hong Kong Government - Emergency Preparedness for Influenza Pandemic in Hong Kong and develop in-house supplies of protective equipment.
(http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/checklist-e_flu_eng_20051105.pdf)
- Refer to the Health Advice on Prevention of Avian Influenza in School
(http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/grp-Health-advice-avian-flu-en_20050812.pdf) for the preventive measures.

(C) Before Hong Kong enters pandemic stage

1. If there is a case of avian influenza in school

- Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of Department of Health (DH) will inform the school management that there is a student/staff being affected by avian influenza.
- School management should cooperate with DH in case investigation and contact tracing (both close¹ and social² contacts) by
 - ◆ providing details of staff and students who have contact with the affected student/staff, class list, staff list, activity timetables, e.g. timetables for various interest groups, recent sick leave records, school bus list, floor plan of school and

- other information as required by the DH staff;
 - ◆ arranging interviews with staff/students and parents; and
 - ◆ facilitating DH visits to school and other actions as deemed appropriate to help understand how the disease has been acquired, how far it spreads and what measures are needed to control it.
- Carry out thorough disinfection of potentially contaminated area in the school as soon as possible.
- Cooperate and comply with DH's advice regarding temporary suspension of school.
 - ◆ Before resumption of school,
 - the whole school and school bus should be disinfected with 1:49 diluted household bleach (one part of 5.25% hypochlorite solution in 49 parts of water); and
 - school management should help arrange a health talk to parents/staff/students as deemed necessary.
 - ◆ After school resumption,
 - parents are required to check the body temperature of their children every day and write down details on a record sheet provided by school for inspection;
 - students should be refrained from going to school and consult a doctor if body temperature is higher than 37.2°C; and
 - staff members should also take body temperature before going to school and to consult a doctor when sick.
 - ◆ School management should assist in the follow up of health status of the staff and students; report suspected case to CHP promptly; and take other measures as deemed necessary.
- Sick students/staff should not be allowed to attend school nor should staff/students requiring home/ camp confinement be allowed to do so. Remind them to comply with the health advice and instructions issued by the Government.

2. If the family of a staff member develops avian influenza

- Accept sick leave certificates with the diagnosis of “under medical surveillance” issued by DH to the staff whose family members suffer from avian influenza if the staff requires home/ camp confinement and medical surveillance.

Footnotes:

- 1 In general, close contact of an isolated case in school may include
 - a. those students or staff who have been in direct face-to-face contact with the index patient, and

b. students or staff who have been in the same school bus with the index patient.

This will be assessed by the CHP staff on a case to case basis.

- 2 Social contact of an isolated case in school include those students in the same class with the index case or staff who has contact with the case but do not fit the criteria of close contact.

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