

Advice to School on Prevention of Novel Coronavirus Infection

The recommendation is based on the current knowledge and would be revised if new information is available.

On 23 September 2012, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported two confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection. One had travelled to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Qatar while the other was a Saudi national.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which include viruses that cause the common cold and Severe Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Given that this is a novel coronavirus, WHO is currently in the process of obtaining further information to determine the public health implications of these two confirmed cases.

Good personal hygiene including proper hand hygiene is an effective way to prevent infection. In view of the severity of illness of reported cases and uncertainty on the transmissibility of the novel coronavirus, the following actions are advised for schools to prevent novel coronavirus infection:-

(a) Maintain good indoor ventilation

- Windows of classroom should be opened for better ventilation
- Switch on fans or exhaust fans to enhance air flow
- Keep air-conditioners well-maintained
- Clean the dust-filters of air-conditioners regularly

(b) Environmental cleansing and disinfection

- Keep classrooms, kitchens, canteens, toilets and bathrooms clean and hygienic. School management is advised to maintain good hygienic standard of the school premises through thorough cleansing and disinfection daily (please refer to Annex I for procedures of preparing / using diluted bleach).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, furniture, toys, commonly shared items and floor at least daily by using appropriate disinfectant. For non-metallic surface, disinfect with 1 part of 5.25% household bleach in 99 parts of water, wait until dry and then rinse with water. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol.
- If places are contaminated by respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, use strong absorbent disposable towels to wipe them away. Then disinfect the surface and the neighbouring area with appropriate disinfectant. For non-metallic surface, disinfect with 1 part of 5.25% household bleach in 49 parts of water, leave for 15-30 minutes, and then rinse with water. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol.

(c) Environmental support for hand hygiene practice

- Provide liquid soap and disposable paper towels or hand dryers at places where there are handwashing facilities, e.g. toilets, kitchens / pantries, laundries, art rooms as indicated.
- Provide alcohol-based handrub in places where handwashing facility is available. 70-80% alcohol-based handrub is effective for disinfection only when hands are not visibly soiled.
- Wash hands frequently, especially in the following situation:-
 - before handling food or eating;
 - after sneezing, coughing, cleaning the nose and going to toilet; and
 - after physical education lessons.

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.

Staff and children should seek prompt medical attention if they develop fever or respiratory infection symptoms. For management of sick children in schools, please refer to the Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools / Kindergartens / Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres.

For more information

Please visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health at www.chp.gov.hk

Centre for Health Protection
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Annex I

Procedures of Preparing / Using Diluted Bleach

- Keep windows open while diluting or using bleach to ensure good ventilation.
- Use protect gear (e.g. mask and gloves) when diluting or using bleach as it irritates mucous membranes, the skin or the airway.
- Cold water should be used for dilution as hot water decomposes the active ingredient of bleach and renders it ineffective.
- Use measuring jug to measure proper volume of bleach for dilution.
- Cleaning tools should be soaked in diluted bleach for 30 minutes and then rinsed thoroughly before reuse.

Precaution:

- Avoid using bleach on metals, wool, nylon, silk, dyed fabric and painted surfaces.
- Avoid touching the eyes. If bleach gets into the eyes, immediately rinse with water for at least 15 minutes and consult a doctor.
- Bleach should not be used together or mixed with other household detergents as this reduces its effectiveness in disinfection and causes chemical reaction.
- As undiluted bleach liberates a toxic gas when exposed to sunlight, it should be stored in a cool and shaded place out of reach of children.
- Sodium hypochlorite decomposes with time. To ensure its effectiveness, it is advised to purchase recently produced bleach and avoid over-stocking.
- For effective disinfection, diluted bleach should be used within 24 hours after preparation as decomposition increases with time if left unused.