

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (62) in DH SEB CD/8/36/1  
來函檔號 Your Ref :  
電話 Tel. :  
傳真 Fax No. :

1 February 2005

To: Manager / Supervisor / Officer-in-charge

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Prevention of Meningococcal Infection**

I wish to draw your attention to the prevention of meningococcal infection in relation to the recent reports of meningococcal infection in Mainland China.

Meningococcal infection is caused by a bacterium known as meningococcus. The clinical picture may be variable. Severe illness may result when the bacteria invade the blood stream (causing meningococcaemia) or the brain (causing meningitis). Meningococcaemia is characterized by the sudden onset of fever, intense headache, purpura, shock and even death in severe cases. Meningitis may present with sudden onset of intense headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, photophobia and stiff neck. Early cases can be treated effectively with antibiotics. In Hong Kong, there were four sporadic cases reported in 2004 and one local case this year.

Meningococcal infection is transmitted by direct contact, especially droplets from nose and throats of infected persons. Outbreaks in schools and institutions have been reported in some countries. The incubation period is usually 3 to 4 days but may range from 2 to 10 days.

Travellers should take special precautions when visiting areas that are known to have high incidence of meningococcal infection. These include: avoid crowded places, avoid contacting sick people with fever, maintain good personal hygiene especially frequent handwashing, and wear surgical masks. Meningococcal vaccinations, if given appropriately, may prevent certain strains of meningococcal infections. Those who are concerned should consult their family doctors. Any returning travellers should consult a doctor immediately if they develop fever or any other aforementioned symptoms. They should inform the

doctor their travel history and should not attend schools or institutions while they are sick.

In this regard, please be reminded that a high level of vigilance should be maintained. All staff/children/clients should be advised to adopt the following preventive measures:

- Observe personal hygiene especially the practice of hand washing
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly
- Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, e.g. after sneezing
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly.

Early detection is the key for treatment and control. Should you notice any increase in the number of sickness absence, fever or any other symptoms of infection in your institution, especially among the returning travellers, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as soon as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772.

Further information about meningococcal infection could be obtained via the CHP website at <http://www.chp.gov.hk> and the hotline (tel.: 2575 1221).

Yours faithfully,



(Dr Thomas TSANG)  
Consultant Community Medicine (Communicable Disease)  
Centre for Health Protection



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*