

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (49) in DH/SEB/CD/8/19/1  
來函檔號 Your Ref :  
電話 Tel. :  
傳真 Fax No. :

6 August 2012

Dear Doctor,

**Vigilant against acute gastroenteritis**

I would like to draw your attention to a recent increase in acute gastroenteritis activity. The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of Department of Health recorded 11 institutional outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis in the past one week, as compared to 2 and 5 outbreaks in the preceding two weeks. In particular, half (8 out of 15) of the outbreaks recorded in July were norovirus associated gastroenteritis outbreaks. Communicable diseases surveillance system based at the Accident & Emergency Departments of public hospitals has also shown an increase in the consultation rate of the acute gastroenteritis syndrome group last week (29 July to 4 August).

Acute gastroenteritis can be caused by many viral and bacterial agents. The most common infective causative agent is norovirus. It is also a frequent cause of outbreaks in institutions. Norovirus outbreaks occur more frequently in winter months but they may occur throughout the year. Although norovirus infections are usually self-limiting, they are highly infectious and may result in large scale outbreaks. Symptoms of the infection include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. The infection can be transmitted by consumption of contaminated food, direct contact with the vomitus or excreta of the infected persons, contact with contaminated objects or aerosol spread with contaminated droplets of splashed vomitus.



We would like to seek your assistance in providing the following health advices to the patients and persons who take care of them. In particular,

2. Wash hands before handling food and eating, and after going to the toilet;
3. Cook all food, particularly shellfish, thoroughly before consumption;
4. Refrain from work or school, and seek medical advice if one is suffering from vomiting or diarrhea;
5. Clean up vomitus appropriately:
  - ✧ Keep other people away from the contaminated area;
  - ✧ Wear gloves and mask throughout the disinfection procedure;
  - ✧ Use disposable towels (do not use floor mops) to wipe away all the vomitus from the periphery inward, before applying 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (by adding 1 part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water) to the surface and neighbouring area (say within two metres from the edge of the vomitus);
  - ✧ Leave bleach on the soiled surface for 15 to 30 minutes to allow time for the bleach to inactivate viruses. Then rinse the surface with clean water and leave the surface air dry;
  - ✧ Soak all cleaning tools in 1 in 49 diluted household bleach for 30 minutes and then rinse thoroughly before reuse;
  - ✧ Wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

If you suspect an acute gastroenteritis outbreak occurring in an institution, please report to the Central Notification Office of CHP as soon as possible via fax (2477 2770) or phone (2477 2772) during office hours, or call our Medical Control Officer (pager: 7116 3300 call 9179) outside office hours. CHP will provide advice in the management of such cases and control measures.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health