

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (52) in DH/SEB/CD/8/19/1
來函檔號 Your Ref :
電話 Tel. :
傳真 Fax No. :

21 August 2012

Dear Doctor,

Vigilant against Norovirus and Acute Gastroenteritis (AGE)

Further to our letter sent on 6 August 2012, I would like to provide you with the latest information on norovirus activity in Hong Kong. As of 19 August 2012, 122 institutional AGE outbreaks were recorded and the figure was the highest for same period since 2007. Among them, 52 outbreaks were associated with norovirus.

In the past few years, with the exception for the increase in norovirus activity in the summer of 2006, norovirus associated outbreaks usually started in November till January in the following year. This year, an early increase in the number of norovirus associated outbreaks has been observed since July. There were 8 and 17 norovirus associated outbreaks recorded in July and August (as of August 19) respectively as compared to 0 to 2 outbreaks in preceding three months. Majority (37 outbreaks, 71%) occurred in residential care homes for the elderly.

Cyclical increase in norovirus activities has been observed locally. Emergence of norovirus new strains may be detected during these cyclical increases. For instance, a new genogroup II type 4 (GII.4) variant was found associated with the significant norovirus activity during the 2006 summer period in Hong Kong. From 2011 to June 2012, GI.4 strains were predominantly detected locally by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch. In July, however the number of GI.4 strains has increased in predominance. This strain has been detected in other countries a few years ago and was first detected locally at the end of 2011. The role of GI.4 strains for current increased norovirus activity needs to be further studied.



Norovirus is highly infectious and can result in large scale outbreaks in institutions. I would like to seek your assistance in providing the following health advices to the patients and their caregivers. In particular,

1. Maintain high standards of personal, food and environmental hygiene;
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