

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (37) in DH/SEB/CD/8/19/1
來函檔號 Your Ref :
電話 Tel. :
傳真 Fax No. : 2711 4847

23 December 2011

Dear Medical Superintendent of private hospital,

Vigilant against viral gastroenteritis

I would like to draw your attention to the prevention of viral gastroenteritis in your hospital as we are approaching the traditional peak season of the disease. The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) recorded three institutional outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis last week (11-17 December), as compared with 0 and 2 outbreaks in the preceding two weeks.

Viral gastroenteritis, commonly caused by noroviruses, is a frequent cause of outbreaks in institutions. Norovirus outbreaks may occur throughout the year but are known to occur more frequently in winter months. Although norovirus infections are usually mild and self-limiting, they are highly infectious and may result in outbreaks that are difficult to control. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. The infection can spread through consumption of contaminated food or direct contact with the vomitus or excreta of the infected persons.

We would like to seek your assistance in advising your staff and patients to take precautions against norovirus infection. In particular,



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control

- ✧ Apply standard and contact precautions for suspected cases. Put on gloves, gown, surgical mask, eye protection during close contact with patients or when handling potentially contaminated articles;
- ✧ Practice scrupulous hand hygiene. After gloves are removed, hands should be routinely washed with soap and water, or disinfected with alcohol hand rub if not visibly soiled;
- ✧ Isolate or cohort suspected cases until symptoms have subsided for 48 hours;

- ✧ Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (by adding 1 part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water);
- ✧ Educate patients on personal hygiene and hand hygiene, e.g. wash hands thoroughly using liquid soap before meals and after using the toilet.

Staff who present with vomiting or diarrhoea and may be epidemiologically linked to an outbreak should be advised to refrain from work until 48 hours after recovery. If you notice an increase in the number of patients or staff of your hospital with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis, 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. For more information on norovirus infection, please visit the website of CHP at http://www.chp.gov.hk/content.asp?lang=en&info_id=33&id=24&pid=9.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health