

監測及流行病學處



保障市民健康
Protecting Hong Kong's health

Surveillance
And
Epidemiology
Branch

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5 October 2016

Dear Operator/ Manager/ Infection Control Officer,

**Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) and
Acute Gastroenteritis (AGE)**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health writes to urge institutions to be vigilant against HFMD and AGE outbreaks as we have recorded an upsurge activity of the diseases.

HFMD

The latest surveillance data shows that HFMD activity is increasing in Hong Kong. CHP recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of HFMD in recent weeks from 3 in week 36 (ending on 3 September) to 24 in week 40 (ending on 1 October). There were 14 institutional HFMD outbreaks recorded in the first three days of week 41 (ending on 8 October). Besides, surveillance of HFMD based at the Accident and Emergency departments and sentinel child care centres/kindergartens also recorded a corresponding increase of HFMD activity. As for EV71 infection in 2016, as of 4 October, 22 cases were recorded.

HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. The infection can occur throughout the year but the disease activity is usually peak from May to July in Hong Kong. From 2012 to 2014, a smaller peak also occurred from October to December. In 2015, the summer peak season of HFMD lasted longer than usual. Common



symptoms are fever, sore throat and skin rash over the hands and feet. Although the illness is self-limiting in most cases, some cases especially those caused by EV71 may be associated with complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis.

AGE

CHP also recorded an increased number of institutional outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis in the past few weeks. The number of AGE institutional outbreaks increased from 1 in week 36 (ending on 3 September) to 8 in week 40 (ending on 1 October). There were 7 institutional AGE outbreaks recorded in the first three days of week 41 (ending on 8 October).

Acute gastroenteritis is usually caused by norovirus or rotavirus infection. It is highly contagious and can be transmitted by consumption of contaminated food, contact with the vomitus or excreta of infected persons, contaminated objects and aerosol spread with contaminated droplets of splashed vomitus. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. Although infections are usually mild and self-limiting, they are highly infectious and may result in outbreaks that are difficult to control. It is a frequent cause of outbreaks in institutions. Such outbreaks may occur throughout the year but are known to occur more frequently in winter months.

As daycare and residential institutions are at risk of communicable disease outbreak, I would urge you to keep vigilance against communicable diseases. The ***“Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly”*** and ***“Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities”*** contains practical information and control measures on prevention of communicable diseases and is available at: <http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/guideline/478/35.html>.

If you notice an increase in number of residents or staff with symptoms of HFMD and AGE, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772 so that investigation and control measures can be initiated as soon as possible.

For the latest information on communicable diseases, please visit CHP's webpages below:

- HFMD and EV71 infection (http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/16354.html)
- Acute diarrhoeal diseases (<http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/24/10.html>)

Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr SK CHUANG)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health