

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (38) in DH/SEB/CD/8/19/1

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23 December 2011

Dear Operators/ Managers/ Infection Control Officers of residential care homes,

Vigilant against viral gastroenteritis

I would like to draw your attention to the prevention of viral gastroenteritis in your institution / organization 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 the consumption of contaminated food or direct contact with the vomitus or excreta of infected persons.

To prevent outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis, strict personal, food and environmental hygiene with particular attention to handling of vomitus and faecal matter are very important. I would recommend you to take the following steps:



1. Remind residents and staff to maintain personal hygiene, especially proper hand-washing with liquid soap before meals and after going to the toilet.
2. Remind staff, residents and their families to maintain proper food hygiene. Ensure all food is adequately cooked especially high-risk food like shellfish.

3. Train staff on the proper management and disinfection of the environment after vomiting incidents:
 - ✧ Keep residents away from the area during the cleaning process;
 - ✧ Wear gloves and mask while cleaning the vomitus;
 - ✧ 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 areas (say within two metres of the vomitus);
 - ✧ Leave for about 30 minutes to allow the bleach to inactivate viruses in the vomitus before rinsing the surface with water, and then leave it dry;
 - ✧ Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
 - ✧ Maintain good indoor ventilation.

4. Staff who represent with vomiting or diarrhoea should refrain from work and seek medical advice.

As daycare and residential institutions are at risk of communicable disease outbreak, I would urge you to keep vigilance against communicable diseases. The ***“Guideline 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”*** contain practical information and control measures on prevention of communicable diseases and are available at <http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/grp-elderly-en-20071227.pdf> and http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guideline_prevention_of_communicable_diseases_rchd_full_eng.pdf, respectively. If you notice an increase in number of residents or staff with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis or other infectious diseases, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772 so that investigation and intervention can be initiated as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health