

監測及流行病學處



Surveillance  
And  
Epidemiology  
Branch

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14 October 2015

Dear Principals / Persons-in-charge,

### Vigilance against acute gastroenteritis

I would like to draw your attention to the prevention of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) in the community. The activity of AGE has increased in the past few weeks and we are closely monitoring the situation.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) recorded an increased number of institutional outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis in the past four weeks. There were five and eight institutional AGE outbreaks recorded for week 41 (week ending 10 October) and the first three days of week 42 (week ending 17 October) respectively as compared with zero to three outbreaks per week in the previous months.

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 the 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.



To prevent outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis, strict personal, food and environmental hygiene with particular attention to handling of vomitus and faecal matter are very

衛生防護中心乃衛生署  
轄下執行疾病預防  
及控制的專業架構  
The Centre for Health  
Protection is a  
professional arm of the  
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disease prevention and  
control

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important. I would recommend you to take the following steps:

1. Remind children/students and staff to maintain personal hygiene especially proper hand-washing with liquid soap before meals and after going to the toilet;
2. Remind children/students and staff and their family 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 children/students away from the area during the cleaning process.
  - Wear gloves and a mask while removing the vomitus.
  - Use disposable towels to wipe away all the vomitus from outside inward, before applying diluted bleach (1 in 49) to the surface and the neighbouring area (e.g. within 2 metres of the vomitus).
  - Leave bleach on the soiled surface for 15-30 minutes to allow time for the bleach to inactivate viruses before rinsing the surface with water and mop dry.
  - Floor mops should not be used for cleaning the vomitus.
  - Wash hands thoroughly afterwards.
4. Keep the mouthpiece and protective guard of drinking fountains free from contamination with oral and respiratory secretions. Advise staff/students/children on the following when using drinking fountains:
  - Children using the fountain should not come in direct contact with the orifice guard.
  - Young children are discouraged from drinking directly from the drinking fountain. Individual drinking cups should be used.
  - When individual disposable cups are supplied by schools, there shall be a suitable container for the unused cups and also a receptacle with cover for disposing of the used cups.
  - Expectorating upon the drinking fountain is prohibited.
5. Sick staff, especially the food-handlers, should take sick leave to prevent the spread of disease.
6. Keep affected children and staff away from schools/centres until their diarrhoea or vomiting has subsided for at least 2 days or as advised by the doctor.

As schools, 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 Schools / Kindergartens / Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres”*** contains practical

information and control measures on prevention of communicable diseases and is available at: <http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/460/24522.html>.

If you notice an increase in number of staff/students/children with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis, 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.

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