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7 November 2014

Dear Doctor,

Vigilance against acute gastroenteritis

I would like to draw your attention to the prevention of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) in the community as we are approaching the traditional peak season of the disease.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of Department of Health (DH) recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis in the recent two weeks. There were five and six institutional AGE outbreaks recorded for the week 44 (week ending 1 November) and the first five days of week 45 (week ending 8 November), respectively as compared with 0-3 outbreaks per week for the previous months. Besides, the sentinel surveillance based at General Outpatient Clinics (GOPC) also detected a corresponding increase in AGE activity. The weekly consultation rates of acute diarrhoeal diseases based at sentinel GOPC increased from 3.9 to 4.5 (number of cases per 1000 consultations) from the week ending 25 October to week ending 1 November.

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.



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
Department of Health for
disease prevention and
control

We would like to seek your assistance in providing the following health advices to the patients and persons who take care of them. 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 suffering from vomiting or diarrhea;
5. Clean up vomitus appropriately:
 - Keep other people 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

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.

Thank you for your ongoing support in combating communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health