

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (9) in DH SEB CD/13/1
來函檔號 Your Ref :
電話 Tel. :
傳真 Fax No. : (852) 2711 4847

26 August 2013

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge / Teacher,

**Stay Vigilant Against Communicable Diseases
in Coming School Year**

The new school year is approaching. I would like to take this opportunity to urge your vigilance against communicable diseases at child care centres, kindergartens and schools.

Currently, we are in the summer influenza season. The latest surveillance data of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health showed that there has been an increase in the local influenza activity. The latest influenza detection reported has increased from 75 in week ending July 27 to 170 in the week ending August 17. During the same period of time, 14 institutional influenza-like illness outbreaks were reported, affecting a total of 96 persons.

Moreover, our surveillance data also showed that the activity of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is also very high. The weekly number of RSV detections recorded by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of CHP also increased from 51 in the week ending July 27 to 135 in the week ending August 17. Thirteen institutional outbreaks related to RSV infection were reported in July and August (as of August 22) compared with 8 outbreaks reported from January to June. Both influenza virus and RSV are spread by droplets or direct contact with infectious secretions.



The activities of HFMD have gradually decreased in August after the peak in June and July. Nevertheless, recent consultation rates of HFMD detected by sentinel GPs are still higher than that recorded in the corresponding period of the past two years. Apart from the traditional summer season, a smaller winter peak of HFMD activity also occurred from October to December in the past few years.

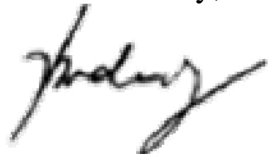
Chickenpox is a highly communicable viral disease. It is the most commonly reported notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong. Seasonally, chickenpox cases usually start to rise in October and peak in December and January. It also causes a number of institutional outbreaks in the community, and most of the outbreaks occurred in pre-primary institutions (including kindergartens, child care centres, etc.) as well as primary and secondary schools.

To prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases in institutions, students/children who develop symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting, skin rash, fever, or influenza-like illness are strongly advised not to attend school and should seek medical advice. Schools should always take measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, e.g., observe good personal, food and environmental hygiene, avoid sharing of clothing and slippers among students/children, etc. For details, please read “**Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools /Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres /Child Care Centres**” which is accessible at

http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guidelines_on_prevention_of_communicable_diseases_in_schools_kindergartens_kindergartens_cum_child_care-centres_child_are_centres.pdf .

If you suspect any outbreaks occurring in your institution, please report to the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at fax: 2477 2770 or tel: 2477 2772. Schools should set up mechanism for collecting personal and contact information of students/children and staff members and notify parents that, when necessary, information and contact details of students/children suspected to be infected will be released to CHP and other relevant departments for effective communicable disease control. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at www.chp.gov.hk .

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. S K CHUANG)

For Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health