

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (209) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 III
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18 May 2016

Dear Medical Superintendent,

Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD) and
Enterovirus 71 (EV71) infection

I would like to draw your attention to the latest situation of Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD) and EV71 infection and enlist your support in the prevention of the disease.

The latest surveillance data shows that Hong Kong is entering into the traditional peak season of HFMD and EV71. The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) recorded an increasing number of institutional outbreaks of HFMD in recent weeks from 5 in week 18 (ending on 30 April) to 30 in week 20 (ending on 14 May). There were 13 institutional HFMD outbreaks recorded in the first three days of week 21 (ending on 21 May). 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 17 May, 3 cases were recorded.

HFMD occurs throughout the year but the disease activity is usually peak from May to July in Hong Kong. Most outbreaks of HFMD affect young children in child care centres and kindergartens. Common aetiological agents of HFMD include coxsackie viruses, EV71 and other enteroviruses. Symptoms of HFMD are fever, sore throat, skin rash over hands and feet, and vesicles in the oral cavity, on the tongue and the palate. The incubation period is usually 3 to 7 days. The disease is mainly transmitted by the faecal-oral route but direct contact with open and weeping skin vesicles may also spread the virus. A person is most contagious during the first week of illness and the infectious agent can be found in stools for weeks.



Although the illness is usually self-limiting, some patients, especially those infected with EV71, may result in complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis. Patients showing severe symptoms/signs should be considered for hospitalisation for further management.

We would like to enlist your continuous support in providing the following **health advice to parents** whose children suffer from HFMD:

- ◆ Children with HFMD should be refrained from nurseries/ kindergartens/ schools or social activities such as parties, interest classes, swimming until all vesicles have dried up and symptoms subsided;
- ◆ Seek medical advice urgently if the child develops important symptoms and signs suggesting severe illness including persistent high fever, repeated vomiting, persistent sleepiness or drowsiness or myoclonic jerks or sudden limb weakness;
- ◆ Protect other family members, especially children, from getting the infection through strict personal and environmental hygiene, including always wash hands thoroughly after changing diapers or handling respiratory secretions, and clean thoroughly toys or appliances which are contaminated by the child's secretions with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixing one part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water);
- ◆ For parents taking their unaffected children during travel, advise them to undertake similar stringent measures.

As EV71 is associated with higher risk of complications and the virus may be excreted in stools for some weeks, the CHP advises children suffering from laboratory confirmed EV71 infections to **stay away from school for two additional weeks** after symptoms have subsided.

Please inform the Central Notification Office (CENO) of CHP (Telephone: 2477 2772, Fax: 2477 2770) or CENO On-line at https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html when you encounter the following cases:

- ◆ **EV71 infection;**
- ◆ **Severe paediatric enterovirus infection (other than EV71 and poliovirus).**

For details of the reporting criteria, please refer to the CENO website at https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_DINS_ONLINE/document/downloadDocumentWithDocName?Dockey=CaseDefinition. CHP will start epidemiological investigations on these cases and take appropriate control measures.

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 sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SK Chuang', written in a cursive style.

(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health