

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (20) in DH/SEB/CD/8/19/1

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16 December 2010

Dear Doctor,

### **Vigilant against viral gastroenteritis**

I would like to draw your attention to the prevention of viral gastroenteritis in the community as we are approaching the traditional peak season of the disease. Five institutional gastroenteritis outbreaks were recorded last week (5-11 December) as compared with 0 to 2 outbreaks every week in preceding three weeks. Sentinel surveillance system of child care centers/kindergartens has also shown an increase in vomiting and diarrhoea activities since late November.

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 infection is usually mild and self-limiting, they are highly infectious and may result in outbreaks that are difficult to control. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. The infection can spread through consumption of contaminated food or direct contact with the vomitus or excreta of the infected persons.

We would like to seek your assistance in providing the following health advice 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 toilet;
3. cook all food, particularly shellfish, thoroughly before consumption;
4. refrain from work or school, and seek medical advice if one is suffering from vomiting or diarrhea;

5. appropriate management of vomitus:
- ✧ keep other people away from the contaminated area;
  - ✧ Wear gloves and a mask throughout the disinfection procedure;
  - ✧ Use disposable towels to wipe away all the vomitus from the periphery inward. Then apply 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (1 part of 5.25% household bleach in 49 parts of water) to the contaminated surface and adjacent areas (e.g. within two metres of the vomitus);
  - ✧ Leave bleach on the soiled surface for 15 to 30 minutes to allow time for the bleach to inactivate viruses. Then rinse the surface with clean water. Leave the surface air dry;
  - ✧ Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
  - ✧ Never use floor mops for cleaning up the vomitus.

If you suspect an acute gastroenteritis outbreak occurring in an institution, please report 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. CHP will provide advice in the management of such cases and control measures.

For more information on norovirus, please visit the website of CHP at [http://www.chp.gov.hk/content.asp?lang=en&info\\_id=33&id=24&pid=9](http://www.chp.gov.hk/content.asp?lang=en&info_id=33&id=24&pid=9) and the website of Hospital Authority at <http://www3.ha.org.hk/idctc/document/Norovirus.pdf>

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health