

本署檔號    Our Ref.    : (203) in DH SEB CD/8/27/1 Pt.21

July 17, 2017

Dear Manager / Infection Control Officer,

**Alert on Sharp Increase in Activity of Seasonal Influenza**

I would like to update you on the latest influenza situation and remind you of heightened vigilance amid the marked increase in activity of seasonal influenza in Hong Kong recently.

Hong Kong has entered the summer influenza season in mid-May. Our latest surveillance data show that the local seasonal influenza activity has been increasing markedly in the past two weeks and has reached a very high level. We foresee that the influenza activity will remain at a high level in the coming weeks. We strongly urge the public, particularly children, the elderly and chronic disease patients, to observe strict personal, hand and environmental hygiene for better personal protection against the seasonal influenza.

The positive percentage of seasonal influenza viruses among respiratory specimens received by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP)'s Public Health Laboratory Services Branch increased from 31.48% to 35.66% from the week of June 25 to that of July 2 (20.76% in the week of June 18). Most detections between June 18 and July 8 were influenza A(H3N2) (91.3%), followed by influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 (5.0%).



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

Due to the recent predominance of influenza A (H3N2), the elderly aged 65 years or above were particularly affected. Most of them also have underlying illnesses.

The number of institutional outbreaks of influenza-like illness (ILI) increased

from 30 (affecting 210 persons) in the week of June 18 to a range of 41 and 44 (affecting 221 - 236 persons) per week in the past three weeks. In the past three weeks, most outbreaks (52.0%) were reported by residential care homes for the elderly, followed by child care centres/ kindergartens (22.8%), primary schools (11.8%), secondary schools (2.4%), residential care homes for the disabled (2.4%), and other institutions (8.7%) .

Young children, elderly and patients with chronic diseases are prone to influenza infection and its complications. As institutions and organisations are collective assembly places, infectious diseases such as influenza could easily spread among people through their daily contact. Sources of infection could come from staff, visitors or clients (especially those having active symptoms).

To prevent outbreaks of influenza or other respiratory infections, staff and visitors with acute febrile illness should not attend institution/organisation till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Besides, residents with fever and respiratory symptoms should be promptly isolated. Guidelines on prevention of communicable diseases in residential care homes for elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities issued by the CHP can be accessed at the following links respectively:

[http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guidelines\\_on\\_prevention\\_of\\_communicable\\_diseases\\_in\\_rche\\_eng.pdf](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guidelines_on_prevention_of_communicable_diseases_in_rche_eng.pdf) and  
[http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guideline\\_prevention\\_of\\_communicable\\_diseases\\_rchd.pdf](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guideline_prevention_of_communicable_diseases_rchd.pdf)

In addition, the following measures are advised to prevent influenza and respiratory tract infections:

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination for personal protection;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70-80% alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Wash or clean hands frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, or after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and wash hands properly afterwards;
- Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin;
- Wear surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly if symptoms of respiratory tract infection or fever develop;
- Maintain good ventilation;
- Avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places when influenza is prevalent; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks when staying in such places; and

- Maintain balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

If you notice an increase in respiratory illnesses or absenteeism among your clients or staff, please report promptly to our Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770) for immediate epidemiological investigations and outbreak control. For the latest information on influenza activity, please visit the CHP's pages below for more information:

- The influenza page ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view\\_content/14843.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/14843.html)); and
- The weekly Flu Express report ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view\\_content/2108.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/2108.html)).

Yours faithfully,

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

(Dr. SK Chuang)  
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health