

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (63) in DH SEB CD/8/27/1 Pt.21

February 22, 2017

Dear Manager / Infection Control Officer,

Arrival of Winter Influenza Season in Hong Kong

We would like to inform you that the local activity of seasonal influenza has continued to increase in the past few weeks, signaling that Hong Kong has entered the winter influenza season. The percentage positive for seasonal influenza viruses increased gradually from 6.20 per cent in the first week of January to 9.12 per cent last week among respiratory specimens received by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP). Majority of the influenza virus detected in the past four weeks were influenza A(H3N2) (86.8%).

Besides, the number of outbreaks of influenza-like illness (ILI) in institutions and schools has increased from one outbreak in the week ending February 11 to 13 outbreaks last week, affecting 95 persons in total. In the first three days of this week (February 19-21), eight ILI outbreaks affecting a total of 27 persons have already been recorded. In the above period, the outbreaks occurred in primary schools (41 per cent), kindergartens or child care centres (23 per cent), residential care homes for the elderly (23 per cent), secondary schools (9 per cent) and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (4 per cent).

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 and
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;
- 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); and
- The weekly Flu Express report (http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/2108.html).

Yours faithfully,



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