

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (3) in DH SEB CD/8/50/1 Pt.2

20 January 2012

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

Be Vigilant Against Scarlet Fever

We would like to provide an update on scarlet fever (SF) in Hong Kong. Two SF cases complicated with toxic shock syndrome (TSS) were recorded on 19 January 2012, involving one which was fatal while the other is currently in paediatric intensive care unit (PICU). The fatal case was a 14-year-old girl who was a secondary school student. As a precautionary measure, the school is advised to suspend class on 20 January for thorough cleansing and disinfection. The second case involves an 11-year-old boy who was a primary school student. He is now in PICU and is in stable condition. While further investigations including further laboratory analysis are being carried out for these two reported cases, we would like to draw your attention to that although SF mainly affects children between 2 to 8 years of age but children of older age group and adults may also be affected as in the above two cases.

While the SF activity had decreased from the upsurge since July last year, there are recent signs of increased activity again in the recent two months. In Hong Kong, relatively more cases occurred from December to May though this seasonal pattern might not be seen every year. We are expecting more SF cases in the coming few months.

SF is a contagious disease caused by bacteria. Patients usually acquire the infection through either respiratory route or direct contact with infected respiratory secretions. It usually presents as fever, sore throat and rash. The rash appears on the first or second day of illness over trunk and neck. Then it spreads to the limbs especially on axilla, elbow and groin. Typically SF rash does not involve the face. The rash is characterized by a "sandpaper" texture. It subsides after one week and is followed by skin peeling over palms and soles. SF is sometimes complicated with middle ear infection and kidney disease. SF can effectively be treated by appropriate antibiotics. People suspected to have SF should consult doctors immediately.



For the prevention of SF, the following measures are recommended:

- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, e.g., after sneezing;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Keep good ventilation;
- Patients suffering from SF should not go to the school/child care centre until they fully recover.

If you notice an increase in the number of your students and staff with symptoms of SF, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel: 2477 2772. CHP will give advice on the management of such cases and take appropriate control measures. When situation warrants, we may consider to advise schools affected to suspend classes. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at <http://www.chp.gov.hk>.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. S K CHUANG)

For Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health