

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (60) in DH SEB CD/8/7/1
來函檔號 Your Ref :
電話 Tel. :
傳真 Fax No. :

4 July 2011

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

Prevention of Chickenpox

I would like to draw your attention to the prevention and control of chickenpox in your school/centre as recent surveillance data from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has shown an increase in chickenpox notification in Hong Kong.

CHP has received 439 chickenpox notifications for the week ending 2 July, as compared to the weekly notification of 280, 390 and 433 cases in the weeks ending 11 June, 18 June and 25 June respectively.

Chickenpox is a very common childhood infection. It occurs all year round. It is transmitted by direct person-to-person contact, through droplets or airborne spread of the discharge from the respiratory tract, and indirectly from the articles freshly soiled by discharges from the infected persons' lesions. Children suffering from chickenpox may develop low-grade fever and skin rash on their scalp and body, which spreads to the face, arms and legs with formation of vesicles over a period of 5 days. The rashes occur mainly on the trunk and the vesicles are itchy. The vesicles dry up and form a scab in about three days and the patient usually recovers in about two to four weeks. Although chickenpox is usually a mild and self-limiting disease, those with low body resistance are more likely to suffer from complications such as skin infection, scarlet fever, pneumonia and encephalitis. Infection in early pregnancy may associate with congenital malformation of the fetus.

Local epidemiological data showed that less than 0.1% of chickenpox cases (six cases) reported in 2011 have concurrent scarlet fever infection. Scarlet fever is a bacterial infection caused by Group A Streptococcus. It mostly affects children under 10 years of age. Prompt antibiotic treatment is effective against scarlet fever. Patients suspected to have scarlet fever should seek prompt medical consultation and take antibiotics according to the doctor's instruction.



To prevent chickenpox outbreaks in your institution, the following measures are recommended:

1. To screen for sick children before they enter the school/centre. The sick child should stay at home and seek medical advice. The sick child should be excluded from school/centre for around one week or until the skin lesions crusted to prevent spreading the disease to others.
2. To supervise children on personal hygiene practices especially on how to wash the hands properly with liquid soap, cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, and proper disposal of nasal and mouth discharge.
3. To keep the environment clean and hygienic, and maintain good ventilation, as well as following the “ Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools/ Kindergartens / Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres” which is available at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/School_full_eng_20090115.pdf.
4. In case of outbreak, maintain good communication with parents by issuing a letter/notice to keep them updated of the disease and outbreak situation and to appeal for their understanding and cooperation on the need to keep children at home for rest when they develop fever and rash.

If you notice an increase in the number of children with symptoms of chickenpox or an increase in the number of absentees, 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 appropriate control measures. For more information, please visit the website of CHP at <http://www.chp.gov.hk>.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr Christine WONG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health