

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (30) in CDB/8/22/1 Pt.4
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5 July 2023

Dear Doctor,

Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

I would like to draw your attention to the recent increase in activity of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and enlist your support in the prevention of the disease.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health recorded a recent increase in the number of HFMD institutional outbreaks in the recent weeks, from three (affecting nine persons) in the week ending 17 June to nine (affecting 53 persons) last week. There were seven outbreaks (affecting 17 persons) recorded in the first three days of this week (ending on 8 July). In addition, surveillance of HFMD based at sentinel child care centre/kindergartens and general out-patient clinics also recorded corresponding increases in HFMD activity recently. On the other hand, no EV71 infection and severe paediatric enterovirus infection (other than EV71 and poliovirus) were recorded this year as at 4 July 2023.

HFMD is a viral infection commonly seen in children. In Hong Kong, HFMD occurs throughout the year with the usual peak season occurring from May to July. A smaller peak may also occur from October to December. HFMD mainly affects young children with outbreaks commonly occurring in CCC/KG. Common aetiological agents of HFMD include coxsackieviruses, enterovirus 71 (EV71) and other enteroviruses. The incubation period ranges from three to seven days. The disease is mainly transmitted by the faecal-oral route but direct contact with open and weeping skin vesicles may also spread the virus. An infected person is most contagious during the first week of illness and the virus can be found in stools for weeks. Although HFMD is usually self-limiting, some patients, especially those infected with EV71, may develop complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis.

We would like to enlist your support in providing the following health advice to HFMD patients and their carers/parents:

- ◆ Children with HFMD should refrain from nurseries/kindergartens/schools, social activities and swimming until all vesicles have dried up and symptoms subsided;



- ◆ Seek medical advice urgently if they develop symptoms and signs suggesting severe illness such as persistent high fever, repeated vomiting, persistent sleepiness or drowsiness, myoclonic jerks or sudden limb weakness;
- ◆ Protect other family members, especially children, from getting the infection through strict personal and environmental hygiene. **Alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses causing HFMD (e.g. EV71);** and
- ◆ As EV71 is associated with higher risk of complications and the virus may be excreted in stools for some weeks, CHP advises children suffering from laboratory confirmed EV71 infection to **stay away from school for two additional weeks** after symptoms have subsided.

Please report cases of EV71 infection and severe paediatric enterovirus infection (other than EV71 and poliovirus) to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of the CHP by fax (2477 2770) or phone (2477 2772) during office hours, or call our Medical Control Officer (pager: 7116 3300 call 9179) outside office hours. The reporting form and the case definition as well as online reporting are also available on CENO On-line website (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html). CHP will carry out epidemiological investigations for these cases and take appropriate control measures.

The latest surveillance data on HFMD and EV71 are published in the weekly “*EV Scan*” (http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/guideline1_year/29/134/441/502.html). Further information can be found from the following webpage: http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/16354.html. Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



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