

本署檔號 Our Ref. : ( 24 ) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 II  
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25 March, 2010

Dear Doctor,

**Be vigilant against Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD) and  
Enterovirus 71 (EV71) infection**

I would like to urge you to be vigilant against HFMD outbreaks and EV71 infection as we have recorded an increased number of HFMD outbreaks recently. In March this year (as of March 23), the Centre for Health Protection received 21 reports of HFMD institutional outbreak, which is higher than the number of 10 to 11 outbreaks reported in the previous two months (January and February). The 21 institutional outbreaks involved 17 kindergartens/child care centres, 2 primary schools, 1 crèche and 1 special school, affecting a total of 85 people. The sentinel surveillance system based at child care centres and kindergartens has also detected a significant increase in HFMD activity recently. As of March 23, 7 cases of EV71 infection were reported this year, all without severe complication.

HFMD is a common childhood infectious disease in Hong Kong. It occurs throughout the year but is more commonly seen during summer (May through July). In the past few years, a smaller winter peak of HFMD activity also occurred from October to December. Most outbreaks affect young children in child care centres and kindergartens. Common aetiological agents of HFMD include Coxsackie viruses, EV71 and other enteroviruses. The main symptoms of HFMD are fever, sore throat, skin rash over hands and feet, and vesicles in the oral cavity, on the tongue and palate. The incubation period is usually 3-7 days. The disease is mainly transmitted by the faecal-oral route. Direct contact with open and weeping skin vesicles may also spread the virus. A person is most contagious during the first week of illness and the infectious agent can be found in stools for weeks. Although the illness is usually self-limiting, some patients infected with EV71 virus may result in complications like myocarditis, encephalitis or poliomyelitis-like paralysis.



You may wish to refer to the “**Management of HFMD in Health Care Settings**” published by the Scientific Committee on Enteric Infections and Foodborne Diseases of CHP for detailed information on laboratory testing and infection control measures (available at: [http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/SCEIFD\\_Management\\_of\\_HFMD\\_in\\_Health\\_Care\\_Settings.pdf](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/SCEIFD_Management_of_HFMD_in_Health_Care_Settings.pdf)). Cases showing severe symptoms/signs should be considered for hospitalisation for investigation and treatment.

We enlist your continual support in providing the following **health advice to parents** whose children suffer from HFMD:

- Children with HFMD should be refrained from nurseries/kindergartens/schools or social activities such as parties, interest classes, swimming until all vesicles have dried up and symptoms subsided;
- Seek medical advice urgently if the child develops important symptoms and signs suggesting severe illness including persistent high fever, repeated vomiting, persistent sleepiness or drowsiness or myoclonic jerks or sudden limb weakness.
- Protect other family members, especially children, from getting the infection through strict personal and environmental hygiene, including always wash hands thoroughly after changing diapers or handling respiratory secretions, and clean thoroughly toys or appliances which are contaminated by the child’s secretions with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% bleach with 49 parts of water);
- For parents who are taking their unaffected children during travel, advise them to undertake similar stringent measures when visiting friends or relatives in other places.

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 infections to stay away from school for two additional weeks after symptoms have subsided.

If you encounter an increase in the number of clients with HFMD coming from the same institution or ***laboratory confirmed cases of EV71 OR clinical case who present with severe complications possibly due to EV71***, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP (Telephone: 2477 2772, Fax: 2477 2770) or CENO On-line at <http://www.chp.gov.hk/ceno> as early as possible. CHP will start epidemiological investigations and take appropriate control measures. The reporting criteria of EV71 are available in CENO On-line. For more information on HFMD and EV71 infection, please visit the website of CHP at <http://www.chp.gov.hk>.

Yours sincerely,



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