監測及流行病學處

衞生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection
保障市民健康
Protecting Hong Kong's health

Surveillance
And
Epidemiology
Branch

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Dear Doctor,

Vigilance against Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (HFMD) and Enterovirus 71 (EV71) infection

We would like to inform you that our latest surveillance data showed that Hong Kong has entered the peak season of HFMD. In the last week (April 28 to May 4), The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health recorded ten institutional HFMD outbreaks, which was higher than the number recorded in preceding three weeks which ranged from three to six outbreaks per week. The sentinel surveillance system based at child care centres/ kindergartens also detected an increase in HFMD activity recently.

HFMD 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 to 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 information on laboratory testing and infection control measures 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 continuous 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 one part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water).

- For parents taking their unaffected children during travel, advise them to undertake similar stringent measures.

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.

Please inform the Central Notification Office (CENO) of CHP (Telephone: 2477 2772, Fax: 2477 2770) or CENO On-line at http://www.chp.gov.hk/ceno when you encounter the following cases:

- **EV71 infection;**
- **Severe paediatric enterovirus infection (other than EV71 and poliovirus).**

For detailed reporting criteria, please refer to the CENO website at https://ceno.chp.gov.hk/casedef/casedef.pdf. CHP will start epidemiological investigations on these cases and take appropriate control measures.

Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours sincerely,

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