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Dear Doctors,

Viral gastroenteritis outbreaks associated with Norovirus

Recently there has been an increase in institutional outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis (GE) caused by norovirus (or norwalk-like virus). Norovirus is a common cause of viral gastroenteritis in Hong Kong. It tends to be more active towards winter months. Outbreaks in institutions are not uncommonly seen.

During 1-16 September, there were 26 suspected and confirmed outbreaks of gastroenteritis caused by norovirus in institutions like schools, child care centres, and homes for the elderly.

Besides conducting epidemiological investigations and implementing control measures, Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has issued letters to schools, kindergartens, child care centers and elderly homes alerting them of the situation and to take appropriate measures.



Norovirus has high infectivity and can cause secondary spread among household members in a family. To prevent the spread of viral gastroenteritis, please kindly advise your patients to observe strict personal, food and environmental hygiene with particular attention on handling of vomitus and faecal matter by the following measures:

- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating and after going to toilets and handling vomitus or faecal matter.
- Wear gloves while disposing of vomitus and faeces, and wash hands afterwards.
- Clean and disinfect soiled linens, clothes and surfaces promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (1:49).
- Maintain good indoor ventilation
- Make sure that food, particularly seafood and shellfish, is cooked thoroughly
- Staff and school children developing vomiting or diarrhoea should refrain from work or school, and seek medical advice.

If you encounter an increase in the number of clients with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis coming from the same institution, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as early as possible at Fax: 24772770 or Tel: 24772772. CHP will start epidemiological investigations and take appropriate control measures.

More information is also available at the website of CHP at (http://www.chp.gov.hk/health_topics.asp?lang=en&id=24&pid=9).

Yours sincerely,



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