

本署檔號 Our Ref.: ( 19 ) in DH SEB CD/8/39/1

來函檔號 Your Ref.:

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27 May 2006

Dear Operators / Managers / Infection control officers of residential care homes,

**Recent increase in noroviral gastroenteritis outbreaks  
in residential care homes for the elderly**

We would like to bring to your attention the recent increase in acute gastroenteritis outbreaks caused by norovirus. In the past two weeks, our sentinel surveillance system based at residential care homes for the elderly (RCHE) showed an increase in the number of diarrhoeal episodes among the elderly living in the residential care homes. There was also more than twofold increase in the number of noroviral gastroenteritis outbreaks occurring in elderly homes as compared with that of April. To this end, we would like to call for your immediate actions to prevent norovirus infection in your institution.

Viral gastroenteritis, commonly caused by norovirus, is a frequent cause of outbreaks in institutions such as schools, kindergartens, child care centres, and elderly homes. Norovirus infections are usually mild and self-limiting. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever and malaise. The infection can spread through the consumption of contaminated food or direct contact with the vomitus or excreta of infected persons.

To prevent outbreak of acute gastroenteritis in your institution, strict personal, food and environmental hygiene with particular attention in handling of vomitus and faecal matter is very important. I recommend that you take the following steps:



1. Remind residents and staff to maintain personal hygiene practices especially on proper hand-washing instructions using liquid soap before meals and after going to toilet.
2. Remind staff, residents and their family members to maintain proper food hygiene during institutional stay as well as home leave. Ensure all food is adequately cooked especially high risk food like shellfish.
3. Follow the Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Disease in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly and Disabled Homes to keep the environment of the residential care homes clean and hygienic.
4. Train staff on proper management and disinfection of the environment after vomiting incidents:
  - ✧ Keep residents away from the area during the cleaning process;
  - ✧ Wear gloves and mask while cleaning the vomitus;
  - ✧ Use disposable towels (do not use floor mops) to wipe away all the vomitus from outside inward, before applying diluted bleach 1:49 to the surface and neighbouring area (say within two metres of the vomitus);
  - ✧ Leave for about 30 minutes to allow the bleach to inactivate viruses in the vomitus before rinsing the surface with water, and then leave it until dry;
  - ✧ Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
  - ✧ Maintain good indoor ventilation.

Staff developing vomiting or diarrhea should be advised to refrain from work and seek medical advice. If you notice an increase in the number of residents or staff with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis, please inform the Central Notification Office of CHP as soon as possible via Fax: 2477 2770 or Tel:2477 2772. CHP will provide advice in the management of such cases and take appropriate control measures.

For more information, please visit the website of CHP at [http://www.chp.gov.hk/content.asp?lang=en&info\\_id=33&id=24&pid=9](http://www.chp.gov.hk/content.asp?lang=en&info_id=33&id=24&pid=9)

Yours sincerely,



(Dr Thomas Tsang)

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