

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (213) in DH/SEB/CD/8/19/1
來函檔號 Your Ref :
電話 Tel. :
傳真 Fax No. :

9 January 2025

Dear Doctor,

Vigilance against acute gastroenteritis (AGE)

I would like to draw your attention to the recent upsurge of AGE activity and enlist your support in the prevention of the disease.

The surveillance data of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health showed a significant increase in the number of patients attending Accident and Emergency Departments with AGE symptoms and residents in sentinel residential care homes for the elderly with vomiting. The number of AGE outbreaks increased sharply from seven recorded in the week ending 28 December last year to 19 in the week ending 4 January, with some patient samples tested positive for norovirus in laboratory testing.

AGE is usually caused by norovirus or rotavirus infection. These viruses can be transmitted by consumption of contaminated food, contact with the vomitus or excreta of the infected persons, contaminated objects, and aerosol spread with contaminated droplets of splashed vomitus. They are highly infectious and may result in outbreaks that are difficult to control. AGE outbreaks may occur throughout the year although they are relatively more common in winter months.

To prevent AGE outbreaks, strict personal, food and environmental hygiene, with particular attention to handling of vomitus and faecal matter, is very important. Alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses frequently causing AGE (e.g. norovirus). In view of the situation, we would like to seek your assistance in providing the following health advice to your patients and persons who take care of them:

1. Maintain a high standard of personal, food and environmental hygiene;
2. Wash hands before eating and handling food, and also after going to the toilet;



3. Cook all food, particularly shellfish, thoroughly before consumption;
4. Refrain from work or school, and seek medical advice if suffering from vomiting or diarrhea;
5. Clean up vomitus appropriately:
 - Keep other people away from the area during the cleaning process;
 - Wear gloves and a surgical mask while removing the vomitus;
 - Use disposable towels to wipe away all the vomitus from outside inward, then apply diluted bleach (1 in 49) to the surface and the neighbouring area (e.g. within 2 metres of the vomitus);
 - Leave bleach on the soiled surface for 15-30 minutes to allow time for the bleach to inactivate viruses before rinsing the surface with water and mopping the area dry;
 - Floor mops should not be used for cleaning the vomitus;
 - Wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

If you suspect an AGE outbreak occurring in an institution/school, please report to the Central Notification Office of the CHP (Fax: 2477 2770; Tel: 2477 2772; Email: diseases@dh.gov.hk) 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 the CENO On-line website (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.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 Albert AU)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health