

CHP investigates a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 31) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza.

The case involves a 5-year-old girl with good past health, who has presented with cough and runny nose since January 21. She developed fever on January 23 and was admitted to the Union Hospital on the same day. She was discharged on the next day. She later developed shortness of breath on January 29. She attended a private general practitioner on January 30 and was later brought to the Accident and Emergency Department at Prince of Wales Hospital for medical attention and was subsequently transferred to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit of the hospital on the same day for further management. Her nasopharyngeal swab tested positive for influenza A (H1) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with pneumonia. She is now in serious condition.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had not received a seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for this season and had no travel history during the incubation period. The patient's father has had upper respiratory tract infection recently. Her other home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far.

The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Hong Kong has already entered the 2019-20 winter influenza season and seasonal influenza activity is expected to remain at an elevated level for some time. Members of the public aged six months or above who have not yet received influenza vaccination, particularly children, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses, are advised to receive an SIV as early as possible to better protect themselves in the coming winter influenza season against influenza A and B infections. It takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination."

The 2019/20 seasonal influenza vaccination programmes, including the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme and the Government Vaccination Programme, have been launched. As well, the SIV school outreach has been regularised to allow all primary schools to join, and has been extended to kindergartens, child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres as a pilot.

"Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged six months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive an SIV for personal protection. Vaccinations among family members is key to protecting their personal and family health," the spokesman said.

The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses:

- Receive an SIV for personal protection;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Wash or clean hands frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, or after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs;
- Cover the nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin;
- Put on a surgical mask when respiratory symptoms develop;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks when staying in such places; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

The public may visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#) for more information.