

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 2) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection.

The 5-year-old boy, with good past health, has presented with fever, cough, runny nose, abdominal pain and vomiting since October 27. He was admitted to St Teresa's Hospital on October 30 and was transferred to the paediatric intensive care unit of Kwong Wah Hospital for further management on the next day. He is now in a stable condition.

His respiratory specimen tested positive for influenza A (H3) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with sepsis.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient did not receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for the current season and had no travel history in the incubation period. His home contacts remain asymptomatic so far. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

The Vaccination Subsidy Scheme 2018/19 and the Government Vaccination Programme 2018/19 were launched on October 10 and 24 respectively. A spokesman for the CHP urged eligible persons to receive subsidised or free SIV in a timely manner to better protect themselves in the coming winter influenza season.

"Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive SIV for personal protection," the spokesman said.

"Based on past epidemiological patterns, the winter influenza season usually occurs from January to March/April each year. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, we urge eligible persons to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Vaccination among family members is key to protecting their personal and family's health."

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

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination 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.

For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).