

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 11) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza. The 2024/25 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programmes have started on September 26, and the CHP urged the public to receive the seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) to better protect themselves during the coming influenza season.

The case involves a 7-year-old girl with underlying illnesses. She developed a fever, cough and runny nose since November 1. She was brought to Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan on November 3 and admitted for treatment on the same day. She was transferred to the paediatric intensive care unit of Princess Margaret Hospital on November 6 due to worsening symptoms. Her respiratory specimen was positive for influenza A (H1) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with sepsis and pneumonia. She is now in serious condition.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that the patient had not received SIV for this season and had no travel history during the incubation period. Her home contacts have been asymptomatic. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. SIV is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as reducing influenza-related hospitalisation and death. SIV is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive SIV early. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the [CHP's website](#)."

The CHP is concerned that some schools still have not arranged any SIV outreach activities so far. It strongly urges schools that have yet to enrol in the SIV outreach programme to arrange SIV outreach activities as soon as possible to protect students and reduce the chance of influenza outbreaks in schools. For eligible children not receiving SIV through school outreach activities, parents should arrange vaccination for their children at clinics of private doctors enrolled in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme.

As of November 10, the vaccination coverage rate for children aged 6 months to under 2 years was at a low level of about 11.5 per cent. To strengthen vaccination services and boost the SIV coverage rate among children aged 6 months to under 2 years, the DH's Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) are open to all children aged 6 months to under 2 years for

SIV this year. Children aged 6 months to under 2 years can receive SIV services at any MCHCs when they are attending appointments. Parents may also book an appointment for their children to receive vaccinations at designated MCHCs via the online booking system:

booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/sivfhs/index.jsp. Parents are advised to arrange SIV for their children as early as possible to protect health of their children.

A person who gets influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. It is important to receive both SIV and COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible, in particular for children and elderly persons residing in the community or residential care homes. The public should also maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses, and note the following:

- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- For high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised), wear a surgical mask when visiting public places. The public should also wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- 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;
- Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, perform physical activity regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) for more information.