

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and outbreaks of influenza A at primary school and kindergartens

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 17) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection, as well as four influenza A outbreaks at a primary school in Eastern District and three kindergartens in Sha Tin, Kowloon City and Central.

The case of severe paediatric influenza A infection involves a 6-year-old boy with good past health. He has presented with fever, cough and runny nose since January 5. He later developed drowsiness and confusion and was admitted to Queen Mary Hospital for management on January 9. He is now in a stable condition. His nasopharyngeal aspirate tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection and encephalopathy.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had received seasonal influenza vaccination for the current season and had no travel history during the incubation period. His younger sister and brother with recent upper respiratory symptoms earlier sought medical attention without admission and have been in a stable condition. His other home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far.

Regarding outbreaks at schools, the outbreak at the primary school in Eastern District affected 11 boys and nine girls, aged 5 to 11, who have developed fever, cough and sore throat since January 7. Nineteen of them sought medical attention but none required hospitalisation. They are all in a stable condition. The nasopharyngeal swab specimens of two affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

The outbreak at the kindergarten in Sha Tin affected 12 boys and 10 girls, aged 3 to 5, who have developed similar symptoms since January 8. All of them sought medical attention. Three students required hospitalisation and one was discharged following treatment. All patients are in a stable condition. The respiratory specimens of two affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

The outbreak at the kindergarten in Kowloon City involves 12 boys and eight girls, aged 3 to 5, who have developed similar symptoms since January 5. All of them sought medical attention. Five students required hospitalisation and were discharged following treatment. All patients are in a stable condition. The respiratory specimens of seven affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

The outbreak at the kindergarten in Central involves three boys and 20 girls, aged 3 to 6, who have developed similar symptoms since January 9. Fifteen of them sought medical attention. Among them, one student required hospitalisation and was discharged following treatment. All patients are in a stable condition. The nasopharyngeal swab specimens of two affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

Officers of the CHP have conducted site visits to the four schools and advised the schools to adopt infection control measures against respiratory infections. The schools have been put under medical surveillance.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "To prevent outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory infections, it is of prime importance that children with fever, regardless of the presence of respiratory symptoms, should not be allowed to attend school. They should seek medical advice and avoid school till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Schools should also measure and record students' body temperature properly."

Schools are reminded to follow the [Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases](#) on preventive and control measures as well as management of outbreaks, which should be reported to the CHP for prompt follow-up.

"Particularly, children, people aged 50 to 64 years, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses who have not yet received influenza vaccination this season are urged to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination. They should promptly seek medical advice if influenza-like symptoms develop so that appropriate treatment can be initiated as early as possible to prevent potential complications. Parents and carers are reminded to render assistance in prevention, care and control for vulnerable people," the spokesman added.

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses. For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).