

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza B infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (June 23) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza B infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza.

The case involves a 5-year-old boy with good past health. He developed a fever, cough with sputum, runny nose and sore throat since June 17. He was brought to a private doctor for medical attention on June 21 and was referred to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He was admitted to the hospital for treatment yesterday (June 22) and was transferred to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit on the same day. His respiratory specimen was positive for influenza B virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza B infection complicated with sepsis and severe pneumonia. He is now in critical condition.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that the patient had not received seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for this season and had no travel history during the incubation period. Three of his home contacts are currently symptomatic. 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. The seasonal influenza vaccines for this season will expire starting from July this year and the 2024/25 SIV programme is expected to start in September.

â€œMembers of the public who have not received the SIV can still get vaccinated before the expiry of the influenza vaccine of this influenza season (i.e. July/August). Nevertheless, please remember that even if you get vaccinated now, you should still take the latest SIV in the new SIV programme (from October this year), so as to be protected during the influenza season in the next year. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the [CHP's website](#)."

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.