

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza B infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 5) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza B infection, and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza.

The case involves a 9-year-old boy with good past health, who has presented with fever, cough and shortness of breath since October 30. He was taken to the Accident and Emergency Department at Princess Margaret Hospital on November 2 for admission and was transferred to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit at the hospital for further management on November 3.

His nasopharyngeal aspirate tested positive for influenza B virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza B infection complicated with severe pneumonia. He is now in serious condition.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had received seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for this season and had no travel history during the incubation period. His home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far.

The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Although the overall local seasonal influenza activity is currently at a low level, members of the public are advised to receive SIV in a timely manner to better protect themselves in the coming winter influenza season. Particularly, children, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses are urged to get vaccinated as early as possible as 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 on October 9 and 23 respectively. 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 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive SIV for personal protection. Vaccination 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 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.