CHP investigates fatal case of invasive pneumococcal disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 4) investigating a fatal case of invasive pneumococcal disease, and reminded the public to observe hygiene practices against the disease.

The patient was a four-year-old girl with good past health, who had developed fever and cough since November 14, and convulsion on November 26. She was brought to the Accident and Emergency Department at Caritas Medical Centre for medical advice on November 27, and was transferred and admitted directly to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit at Princess Margaret Hospital for further management. Her condition deteriorated and she died on November 30.

Her blood specimen tested positive for Streptococcus pneumoniae upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was severe pneumonia and septic shock.

Initial enquiries revealed that the girl had no travel history during the incubation period. Her home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far. Investigations are ongoing.

The case will be referred to the Coroner for investigation.

"Pneumococcal infection is caused by the bacteria Streptococcus pneumoniae (pneumococcus). It causes a wide range of diseases. More common ones include middle ear infection and chest infection. It may also cause various forms of invasive pneumococcal diseases, such as infection of the brain membranes and blood stream. The infection can be serious or even life-threatening," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Pneumococci are commonly found in the nose and throat of healthy people, particularly in children. Occasionally, these bacteria will cause an infection. They mainly spread through droplets via coughing and sneezing, close contact with the patients or contact with materials soiled with the bacteria.

To prevent pneumococcal infection, the CHP appealed to the public for pneumococcal vaccination and hygiene practices. The public may visit the CHP's invasive pneumococcal disease page for more information.