

CHP investigates outbreak of acute gastroenteritis at kindergarten-cum-child care centre in Tai Po

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (July 3) investigating an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at a kindergarten-cum-child care centre in Tai Po, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The outbreak involves 36 pupils, comprising 24 boys and 12 girls aged 3 to 6, and a staff member. They developed vomiting, diarrhoea and fever since June 29. Nineteen of the affected pupils sought medical attention, five of whom required hospitalisation. Three have been discharged after management. All patients are in stable condition.

The CHP's epidemiological investigation revealed that two students first vomited at the school on June 28. Other students and a staff member developed gastrointestinal symptoms in subsequent days. The CHP considers that the outbreak has a higher chance of person-to-person transmission or environmental contamination, while the chance of involving food poisoning is relatively low.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit and provided health advice to the staff of the kindergarten-cum-child care centre concerning proper and thorough disinfection, proper disposal of vomitus, and personal and environmental hygiene. The kindergarten-cum-child care centre has been put under medical surveillance.

Investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP reminded that alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses frequently causing AGE, e.g. norovirus. Members of the public are advised to take heed of the following preventive measures against gastroenteritis:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;

- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

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The public may visit the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk) or call the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111) for more information.