

CHP investigates outbreak of acute gastroenteritis involving study tour of primary school

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (November 4) investigating an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) involving a study tour organised by a primary school in Tuen Mun between November 1 and 2, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The outbreak involves 26 pupils, comprising 15 boys and 11 girls aged 10 to 11. They developed vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and fever since November 1. Two of the affected pupils sought medical attention and none required hospitalisation. All patients are in stable condition.

The CHP's epidemiological investigation revealed that one of the pupils in the outbreak had first vomited during their visiting activity on November 1. Other pupils exposed to the vomiting incident developed gastrointestinal symptoms subsequently. The CHP considers that the outbreak may be caused by person-to-person transmission or environmental contamination. 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.

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.