

CHP investigates outbreak of upper respiratory tract infection at kindergarten

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 18) investigating an outbreak of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) at a kindergarten in Sha Tin, and appeals to members of the public and staff of institutions to stay alert and maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene.

The outbreak involves 20 pupils, comprising 11 boys and nine girls between 3 and 5 years old. They developed fever, cough, runny nose and sore throat since September 22. Ten of them sought medical attention and two required hospitalisation, one of whose respiratory specimen tested positive for rhinovirus/enterovirus upon laboratory testing. All of them are in stable condition.

Officers of the CHP have advised the school to adopt necessary infection control measures against respiratory infections. The school has been put under medical surveillance. In addition, since the symptoms of URTI are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, the school was covered in the compulsory testing notice (CTN) on September 27 to exclude the possibility of COVID-19 infection. The school has already suspended teaching activities for at least five days for cleaning and executing the CTN.

The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination for personal protection;
- 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;
- 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 nose and mouth 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, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

Members of the public, particularly children, the elderly and those with chronic diseases, should wear a face mask and consult a doctor promptly if they develop symptoms of respiratory tract infection.