

CHP investigates outbreak of upper respiratory tract infection at kindergarten-cum-child care centre in Ma On Shan

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 28) investigating an outbreak of upper respiratory tract infection (URI) at a kindergarten-cum-child care centre in Ma On Shan, and appealed to members of the public and staff of institutions to stay alert and maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene.

The outbreak affected 13 boys and seven girls aged 2 to 5, who have developed URI symptoms including fever, cough and runny nose since September 3. Seventeen of them sought medical attention. Among them, six required hospitalisation and all were discharged after treatment. All patients are now in stable condition.

The respiratory specimens of six children tested positive for adenovirus upon laboratory testing.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit and advised the school to adopt necessary infection control measures against respiratory tract infections. The school has been placed under medical surveillance.

Adenoviruses are a group of viruses which infect the mucous membranes of humans. Depending on the type of virus, they may cause respiratory illnesses and also diarrhoea, eye infections and rashes. Infections can occur all year round. Young children, the elderly and immunocompromised patients are more susceptible.

"The infection mainly spreads through air droplets, direct contact of the oro-nasal secretions of patients, or ingestion of contaminated food or water, and may cause outbreaks of acute respiratory or eye infections in institutional settings such as schools and hospitals," a spokesman for the CHP said.

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

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccinations 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;
- 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.

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.