

CHP investigates two cases of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (September 20) investigating two cases of severe paediatric influenza A infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza.

The first case involves a 5-year-old girl with good past health, who has presented with a fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath and vomiting since September 18. She attended St. Teresa's Hospital on September 19. She attended Queen Elizabeth Hospital today due to worsening symptoms and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit for treatment. Her respiratory specimen was positive for influenza A (H3) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with encephalitis. She is now in critical condition. Her home contacts are currently asymptomatic.

Another case involves a 9-year-old boy with asthma, who has presented with a fever, cough, shortness of breath, and vomiting since September 17. He attended Prince of Wales Hospital on September 19 and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit for treatment. His respiratory specimen was positive for influenza A (H3) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with severe pneumonia. He is now in critical condition. One of his home contacts is currently symptomatic.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that both patients had no travel history during the incubation period. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP stated that the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- 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;
- For high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised), 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 mouth and nose 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, perform physical activity regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) for more information.