

CHP investigates two outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis at kindergartens

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (May 29) investigating two outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at kindergartens in Kowloon Tong and Tuen Mun, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The outbreak in Kowloon Tong involves 37 students, comprising 29 boys and eight girls aged 3 to 4. They developed vomiting and diarrhoea since May 23. Twenty-one of them sought medical attention, three of whom required hospitalisation and two of them have been discharged after management. The stool specimen of one of the hospitalised students tested positive for norovirus. All patients are in stable condition.

According to the CHP's epidemiological investigation, there were students in the outbreak who vomited on school buses. The CHP also confirmed that the affected students did not consume common food or meal boxes, revealing 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.

The outbreak in Tuen Mun involves 37 students, comprising 21 boys and 16 girls aged 2 to 5. They developed fever, vomiting and diarrhoea since May 23. Twenty-five of them sought medical attention, six of whom required hospitalisation. All patients are in stable condition.

According to the CHP's epidemiological investigation, two of the students in the outbreak had developed vomiting on May 23. Other students developed symptoms including vomiting and diarrhoea from May 24 to 28. The CHP also confirmed that the affected students did not consume common food or meal boxes, revealing 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 schools concerning proper and thorough disinfection, proper disposal of vomitus, and personal and environmental hygiene. The schools have 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.

â€‹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.