

Heightened vigilance urged amid increase in local hand, foot and mouth disease and acute gastroenteritis activity

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (October 3) called on members of the public to heighten vigilance against hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and acute gastroenteritis (AGE), as the local activities of HFMD and AGE have been increasing recently.

"Members of the public and management of institutions are urged to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene. The CHP has issued letters to doctors, hospitals, schools and institutions today to draw their attention to the latest situation," a spokesman for the CHP said.

A. Hand, foot and mouth disease

According to the CHP's latest surveillance data, sentinel private medical practitioners and General Out-patient Clinics (GOPCs) recorded an increase of HFMD activity in the past two weeks.

The weekly consultation rate of HFMD at private medical practitioners has increased from 0 per 1,000 consultations in the week ending September 15 to 2.3 and 1.2 in the subsequent two weeks. The rate at GOPCs has increased from 0.4 in the week ending September 15 to 1.1 in the subsequent week.

The numbers of institutional HFMD outbreaks in the past two weeks were 11 (affecting 32 persons) and eight (affecting 24 persons) respectively. As of yesterday (October 2), five outbreaks (affecting 22 persons) had already been recorded in the first three days this week. In the past four weeks, child care centres and kindergartens reported most outbreaks (43 per cent).

As for enterovirus (EV) 71 infection, the weekly number of cases recorded has increased from one case in the week ending September 15 to two and three cases in the subsequent two weeks respectively. As of yesterday, 42 cases had been recorded this year.

"In Hong Kong, HFMD occurs throughout the year. While the disease activity is usually higher from May to July, a smaller peak may also occur from October to December. Schools, institutions and play facilities should observe our guidelines and health advice against outbreaks to better protect young children who are more prone to infections," the spokesman added.

The latest local situation of HFMD and EV 71 infection is published on every Friday in [EV Scan](#) at the CHP website.

B. Acute gastroenteritis

The CHP's latest surveillance data also showed an increase in the number of institutional AGE outbreaks, from two (affecting 11 persons) in the week ending September 22 to five (affecting 38 persons) last week. In the last four weeks, most outbreaks occurred in primary schools (44 per cent).

Sentinel child care centres and kindergartens and residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) also recorded a corresponding increase in the activity of diarrhoea.

"In Hong Kong, AGE occurs throughout the year, but is known to occur more frequently in winter. Schools and institutions are reminded to follow the [Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases](#) on preventive and control measures as well as management of outbreaks, which should be reported to the CHP for prompt follow-up," the spokesman noted.

The public may visit the CHP's pages on [HFMD and EV71 infection](#), [acute diarrhoeal diseases](#) and [norovirus infection](#) for more information.