

Heightened vigilance urged amid increasing activity of hand, foot and mouth disease and enterovirus 71 infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 25) urged the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene as the local activity of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and enterovirus (EV) 71 infection has been increasing in the past two weeks.

According to the CHP's surveillance data, the number of institutional HFMD outbreaks recorded increased from five (affecting 23 persons) to 14 (affecting 60 persons) from the week of May 6 to that of May 13. As of yesterday (May 24), 15 outbreaks involving 59 persons had been reported this week. In the last four weeks, most outbreaks occurred in kindergartens and child care centres as well as primary schools.

As for EV71 infection, while only one case of infection was recorded per month in February and March this year, the number of cases increased to seven in May. As of yesterday, nine cases had been recorded this year.

"HFMD occurs throughout the year. Apart from a summer peak from May to July, a smaller peak may also occur from October to December. As young children are more susceptible, parents should stay alert to their health. Institutional outbreaks may occur where HFMD can easily spread among young children with close contact," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"We have issued letters to doctors, child care centres, kindergartens and primary and secondary schools to alert them to the latest situation. Schools 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 added.

Management of venues with play facilities should pay special attention to the CHP's [Public Health Advice for Play Facilities](#) on appropriate infection control in activities involving young children under 6 during the peak season.

"We noted that HFMD activity in neighbouring areas such as Guangdong and Taiwan has also increased recently. Parents travelling with their children in the coming holidays or summer vacation should pay special attention to personal and environmental hygiene while attending play facilities or having close contact with other children," the spokesman added.

To prevent HFMD, members of the public, and especially the management of institutions, should take heed of the following preventive measures:

- Maintain good air circulation;
- Wash hands before meals and after going to the toilet or handling diapers or other stool-soiled materials;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly, especially when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, such as after sneezing;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and oral discharges properly;
- Clean children's toys and other objects thoroughly and frequently with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of household bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 99 parts of water), followed by rinsing or wiping with clean water;
- Children who are ill should be kept out of school until their fever and rash have subsided and all the vesicles have dried and crusted;
- Avoid going to overcrowded places; and
- Parents should maintain close communication with schools to let them know the latest situation of the sick children.

The CHP's weekly report, EV SCAN (www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/21639.html), is issued every Friday to report the latest local situation of HFMD. The public may also visit the CHP's page on [HFMD and EV71 infection](#) for more information.