

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 22) urged the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene as the local activity of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) has been increasing in the past two weeks.

According to the CHP's latest surveillance data, the number of institutional HFMD outbreaks recorded increased from seven (affecting 33 persons) to 16 (affecting 61 persons) from the week of May 5 to that of May 12. As of yesterday (May 21), nine outbreaks involving 21 persons had been recorded this week. In the last four weeks, most outbreaks occurred in kindergartens and child care centres. As for enterovirus (EV) 71 infection, as of yesterday, four cases had been recorded this year.

"HFMD occurs throughout the year with the usual peak occurring 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 Taiwan has also increased recently. Parents travelling with their children should pay special attention to personal and environmental hygiene while visiting 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;
 - Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as furniture, toys and commonly shared items with 1:99 diluted household bleach (mixing one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite with 99 parts of water), leave for 15 to 30 minutes, and then rinse with water and keep dry. For metallic surfaces, disinfect with 70 per cent alcohol;
 - Use absorbent disposable towels to wipe away obvious contaminants such as respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, and then disinfect the surface and neighbouring areas with 1:49 diluted household bleach (mixing one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite with 49 parts of water), leave for 15 to 30 minutes and then rinse with water and keep dry. For metallic surfaces, disinfect with 70 per cent alcohol;
 - 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.