

Overview of tuberculosis in Hong Kong educational institutions in second half of 2021

The Tuberculosis and Chest Service (TB&CS) of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced today (February 25) the tuberculosis (TB) notifications in the educational institutions in the second half of 2021. The CHP urges the public, especially the stakeholders of schools, including school management, students and parents to maintain personal and environmental hygiene at all times to prevent TB infections.

The TB&CS received 1 916 notifications of TB cases (provisional figure) from July to December 2021, of which 82 cases (4.28 per cent) were aged 3 to 24 (usual school age). During the same period, there were two clusters of TB cases in school settings (each comprising three cases) involving six patients in total. The data of the clusters has been uploaded to the [TB&CS statistics webpage](#).

In 2019 and 2020, the proportion of TB cases for the age group 3 to 24 to the total notified cases was 5.37 per cent and 4.39 per cent respectively.

"Despite a marked and consistent decrease in the notification rate in the past few decades, TB is still a major health problem around the globe. Moreover, clustering of TB cases in the educational institutions occurs from time to time. Early identification of TB cases and prompt initiation of anti-TB treatment remain the mainstay of TB control. The DH will continue to promote awareness of TB in schools through health talks and other publicity work," a spokesman for the DH said.

The spokesman explained that TB is an airborne disease. When a TB patient coughs or sneezes, small droplets containing the tubercle bacilli are generated and spread in the air. If another person breathes in these small airborne droplets, he or she may be infected with the germ. Prolonged exposure, however, is usually the most important condition for the disease to be effectively transmitted.

Members of the public should maintain continued vigilance against TB and adopt a healthy lifestyle with a balanced diet, avoid smoking and alcohol, and have suitable exercise and adequate rest. If symptoms develop, such as persistent cough, blood in sputum, weight loss, fever and night sweating, they should seek prompt medical advice. If diagnosed as having TB, a patient should observe respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, and receive TB treatment under supervision. For more TB-related information, services and figures, the public may also visit the [website of the TB&CS](#) or call the telephone hotline (2572 6024).