

Severe case of influenza A infection in unvaccinated child

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 20) received a report of a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection in a girl who had not yet received the seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV). She is still hospitalised and in critical condition. The CHP urged the public who have not yet received the SIV to act immediately to minimise the risk of serious complications and death after infection.

"A 14 year-old girl living in a boarding section of a special school developed fever and malaise since January 8 and consulted a private doctor on January 10. She started to have confused speech on January 15. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Caritas Medical Centre on January 17 and was admitted immediately. Her condition deteriorated on January 19 and she was transferred to the paediatric intensive care unit of Princess Margaret Hospital for treatment. Her nasopharyngeal swab specimen was tested positive for influenza A (H1) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with encephalopathy," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The girl has underlying illnesses and did not travel during the incubation period. There has been no recent outbreak in her school. Her household contacts, so far, are asymptomatic. Initial investigation revealed that she did not receive 2024/2025 seasonal influenza vaccination. The CHP reiterated its call to the parents to bring their children to receive SIV as soon as possible.

"Influenza vaccination has been scientifically proven to be one of the most effective ways to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, while significantly reducing the risk of hospitalisation and death from seasonal influenza. All persons aged six months and above (except those with known contraindications) who have not yet received the SIV should act immediately, particularly the elderly and children who have higher risk to get infected with influenza and other complications," the spokesman said.

The spokesman reminded the public that Hong Kong has entered the influenza season. As the seasonal influenza activity is expected to increase further while the activity of other respiratory infectious diseases may also increase. To protect their health and that of their family members, the public should not only receive SIV, but also maintain good personal and environmental hygiene, and take the following measures to prevent contacting influenza and other respiratory illnesses:

- Wear surgical masks to prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;

- High-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised) should wear surgical masks when visiting public places. The general public should also wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, consider whether to go to work or school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, perform physical activity regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

For the latest information, members of the public can visit the CHP's [seasonal influenza](#) and [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) webpages.