

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric COVID-19 infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 28) received a report of a severe paediatric case of COVID-19 infection. Although the rate of increase in the COVID-19 activity level in Hong Kong has begun to slow down, the CHP expected the COVID-19 activity level to remain at a relatively high level in a short period of time. Therefore, high-risk individuals are reminded to receive a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible and receive booster doses at appropriate times to minimise the risk of serious complications and death after infection.

The case involves a 1-year-old girl who has good past health. She has developed fever and runny nose since yesterday (May 27) and was brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital today for treatment after having convulsion. She was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit. Her respiratory specimen tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was COVID-19 infection complicated with encephalitis. She remains hospitalised and is in critical condition.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the patient had not received COVID-19 vaccine and had no travel history during the incubation period. Three of her household contacts were symptomatic. Two of them tested positive for COVID-19 by rapid antigen tests and had recovered.

The CHP believes that COVID-19 has become an endemic disease with cyclical patterns. The overall activity of COVID-19 in the local community has continued to rise since mid-March of this year. According to the latest surveillance data as of the week ending May 17, the increase in the viral load of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from sewage surveillance and the test positivity rate of respiratory samples have slowed down compared to the past week. Genetic analysis showed that XDV and its descendent lineages have become the dominating variant strains in Hong Kong. As XDV is a JN.1-related variant, the COVID-19 vaccines currently used in Hong Kong are still effective in preventing it. Latest information does not suggest XDV will cause a more severe disease than JN.1.

The CHP reminded the public who have not received the initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccine (including infants and children) that they should get vaccinated as soon as possible. Those at high risk (particularly the elderly and persons with underlying comorbidities) should receive a booster dose as soon as possible for effective prevention against COVID-19 to minimise the risk of serious complications and death after infection.

Apart from vaccination, in order to prevent COVID-19, influenza, and other respiratory illnesses as well as transmission in the community, the public should maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene at all times and note the following:

- Patients can wear surgical masks to prevent transmission of respiratory viruses. Therefore, 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;
- Practise hand hygiene frequently, 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;
- Avoid sharing personal items;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, consider refraining from going 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 more information on the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme and the latest recommendations on vaccine use, please refer to the CHP's [website](#).