

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 24) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection.

The 18-day-old baby boy, with good past health, has presented with poor feeding and dullness since December 18. He was admitted to Matilda International Hospital on December 22 and was transferred to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Queen Mary Hospital (QMH) on the same day. He was subsequently transferred to the Intensive Care Unit of Cardiothoracic Surgery in QMH for further management on December 23. He is now in a critical condition.

His nasopharyngeal aspirate tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with severe pneumonia and respiratory failure.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had not yet received seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for the current season and had no travel history in the incubation period. His parents had upper respiratory tract infection symptoms recently and are in a stable condition. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

"Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive SIV for personal protection," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As it is already December and Hong Kong will soon enter the winter influenza season, eligible persons are urged to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies. Vaccination among family members is key to protecting their personal and family's health."

The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses:

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination for personal protection;
- 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 as an effective alternative;
- Wash or clean hands frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, or after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs;

- Cover the nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin;
- Put on a surgical mask when respiratory symptoms develop;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Avoid going to crowded or poorly ventilated public places; high-risk individuals may consider putting on surgical masks when staying in such places; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).