

CHP investigates outbreak of acute gastroenteritis at primary school in Tuen Mun

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (March 21) investigating an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at a primary school in Tuen Mun, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The outbreak involves 41 students, comprising 26 males and 15 females aged 6 to 9. Twenty-seven of them sought medical attention, one of whom required hospitalisation, and has been discharged after management. The stool specimen of the hospitalised student tested positive for norovirus.

According to the CHP's epidemiological investigation, one of the students in the outbreak had vomited in the school playground earliest on March 15 and another student vomited on one of the floors on March 17. Other students developed vomiting and diarrhoea from March 18 to 19. The CHP also confirmed that the affected students did not consume common food or meal boxes, and the investigation results revealed that there was an outbreak of AGE caused by norovirus in the affected school, with a higher chance of person-to-person transmission or environmental contamination. The chance of involving food poisoning is relatively low.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit and provided health advice to the staff of the school concerning proper and thorough disinfection, proper disposal of vomitus, and personal and environmental hygiene. The school has been put under medical surveillance.

Investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP advised members of the public to take heed of the following preventive measures against gastroenteritis:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and

- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

The public may visit the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk) or call the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111) for more information.