

CHP investigates scabies outbreak at elderly home in Tuen Mun

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (June 11) investigating an outbreak of scabies at a residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) in Tuen Mun, and reminded the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene against scabies.

The outbreak involves six male and 14 female residents aged 73 to 95. They have presented with skin itchiness and rash since May 5. All sought medical attention and none required hospitalisation. All patients have been in a stable condition.

The skin scraping of an affected person was confirmed to have *Sarcoptes scabiei* after laboratory examination.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit and advised the RCHE to adopt necessary infection control measures against scabies infections. The RCHE has been put under medical surveillance.

RCHEs are reminded to follow the [Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases](#) on preventive and control measures as well as management of outbreaks, which should be reported to the CHP for prompt follow-up.

"Scabies is a skin disease caused by a mite called *Sarcoptes scabiei* and usually spreads through direct skin contact with infested people. Their clothing and bedding may also carry the mites and eggs and transmit the disease. Infested people usually present with intense itchiness. The common affected areas are finger webs, and skin folds of wrists, elbows, armpits, nipples, the lower abdomen, external genitalia, buttocks and groins. It can affect people of all ages, but people with weakened immunity or the elderly are more susceptible. Scabies can spread rapidly in crowded conditions, hence outbreaks of scabies have been reported in hospitals, child-care facilities, hostels and elderly homes," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against scabies infestation:

- Keep good personal hygiene, perform hand hygiene frequently and bath daily;
- Regularly change into clean clothing and regularly change towels and bed linen;
- Avoid sharing clothing and personal items with others;
- Perform skin inspection for institutionalised residents regularly for early identification of infestation;
- When caring for and coming into contact with infested persons, wear appropriate personal protective gear such as gloves and a gown;

- Wash hands thoroughly before and after contact with an infested person;
- Wash the clothing, towels and bed linen of infested persons separately. These items should be washed in hot water at 60 degrees Celsius or above for not less than 10 minutes so as to kill the mites and their eggs. Place non-washable items in a plastic bag and seal it up for at least 14 days before reuse;
- If you suspect scabies, seek medical advice immediately.