

CHP investigates two cases of severe paediatric COVID-19 infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 12) received reports of two cases of severe paediatric COVID-19 infection and reminded the public the overall activity of COVID-19 in the local community has continued to rise. High-risk individuals should 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 first case involves a 17-month-old girl with good past health, who developed fever and cough since May 9. She attended Queen Mary Hospital yesterday (May 11) and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit for treatment. Her respiratory specimen tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, adenovirus and rhinovirus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was COVID-19, adenovirus and rhinovirus co-infection complicated with croup. She remains hospitalised and is in critical condition.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the 17-month-old patient had not received COVID-19 vaccine and had no travel history during the incubation period. Two of her household contacts were symptomatic and tested positive for COVID-19 by rapid antigen tests. Both of them had recovered.

The second case involves a 13-year-old girl with underlying illness, who developed shortness of breath on May 9. She attended Queen Mary Hospital on the same day and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit for treatment. Her respiratory specimen tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was COVID-19 infection complicated with pneumonia. She remains hospitalised and is in serious condition.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the 13-year-old patient had completed the initial doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and had no travel history during the incubation period. Two of her household contacts had presented with respiratory symptoms and tested positive for COVID-19 by rapid antigen tests.

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 3, the viral load of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from sewage surveillance, the test positivity rate and the average consultation rate of COVID-19 cases in general out-patient clinics have continued to rise over the past four weeks. In particular, the percentage of respiratory samples testing positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus increased to 11.42 per cent from 5.09 per cent four weeks ago (the week of March 30 to April 5), a record high in the past year. The viral load per capita of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was around 690,000 copy/litre, significantly increased from 370,000 copy/litre four weeks ago. Furthermore, sewage surveillance data showed an increasing

trend in the local prevalence of XDV. 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](#).