



### Influenza Prevention

Hong Kong is now in the traditional winter influenza season. There are concerns on the recent reports on institutional outbreaks of influenza and early Easter break for students in primary schools and kindergartens. At present, there is no indication showing there is any significant change of the influenza virus that makes it exceptionally more virulent than the usual flu virus. Hong Kong remains a safe place for travel. The early Easter break is both a precautionary as well as an administrative decision. I attach a press release from the Food and Health Bureau of today which clarified the situation.

To prevent influenza, I should be grateful if you would disseminate the following health messages to travel agencies and travellers:

- Build up good body immunity by having a proper diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, reducing stress and not smoking;
- Maintain good personal hygiene, and wash hands after sneezing, coughing and wear a mask when developing symptoms of respiratory infections;
- Maintain good ventilation; and
- Avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation, especially during peak influenza season.

Members of the public, particularly children, elderly people and those with chronic diseases, should wear face masks and consult their doctors for medical advice promptly if they develop symptoms of respiratory tract infection.

I also attach a leaflet on influenza and its prevention for your information. For update information on influenza, you may visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection at [www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk).

Yours sincerely,

(Dr. Henry KONG)  
Chief Port Health Officer  
Department of Health

## **Press Releases**

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Early Easter break for students in primary schools and kindergartens

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The Secretary for Food and Health, Dr York Chow, announced last night (March 12) that all primary schools, kindergartens and nursery schools would start their Easter break from today for two weeks as a precautionary measure against the spread of influenza in schools.

Speaking at a stand-up media session, Dr Chow noted that the influenza peak season would be expected to last for a few more weeks and the early break would help to reduce the chance of young school children contracting the virus.

The decision was reached at a meeting in the evening attended by representative from the Education Bureau, experts from the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority as well as Professor Yuen Kwok-yung, having reviewed the latest situation on the flu situation which indicated that the number of reported cases was on the rise.

Dr Chow noted that the recent spate of influenza cases had caused anxiety and pressure on both parents and school management on whether to allow children to attend schools, especially where there was an outbreak of the virus.

He said, "We understand their concern and anxiety. There are calls from members of the public hoping the Government would make a firm decision to relieve their anxiety.

"As the Easter holiday is only a week away, we decide to ask all the primary schools, kindergartens and nursery schools to take an early break for two weeks.

"This is both a precautionary as well as an administrative decision. During the break, schools will be thoroughly cleansed and the two-week period is two times of the incubation period for the virus.

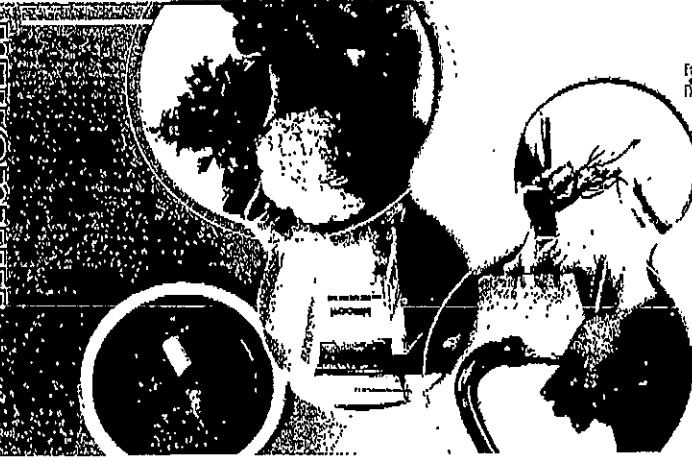
"We hope the break would minimise the chance of infection for these young children so that they can have a clean and healthy environment when they return after the holidays."

Ends/Thursday, March 13, 2008  
Issued at HKT 01:04

NNNN

Communicable Diseases Series

# INFLUENZA



Department of Health

## Causative agent

Influenza is a highly infectious viral disease. It is caused by various types of influenza viral strains. Three types of influenza viruses are recognized: A, B and C. Type A is more common. In Hong Kong, the two subtypes of influenza A, H1N1 and H3N2, are most commonly seen. Emergence of new subtypes occurs from time to time at irregular intervals, which is responsible for widespread outbreaks and makes periodic re-vaccination of the influenza vaccine necessary. In Hong Kong, the disease is more prevalent in periods from January to March and from July to August.



## Mode of transmission

The disease is mainly spread through droplets in crowded and enclosed spaces. The infection may also be spread from person to person by direct contact with the secretions of infected persons.



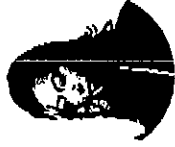
## Incubation period

The incubation period is short, usually around 1 to 3 days.

## Clinical features

Influenza is an acute illness of the respiratory tract, characterized by:

- ▶ fever
- ▶ headache
- ▶ muscle aches
- ▶ runny nose
- ▶ cough and sore throat
- ▶ other symptoms may include stuffy nose, tiredness, diarrhea and vomiting



## Complications

- ▶ Complications are common among those with weak body resistance.
- ▶ Severe complications include bronchitis and pneumonia.



## Prevention

### Observe personal hygiene

- ▶ Keep hands clean and wash hands properly.
- ▶ Wash hands promptly if they are contaminated by respiratory tract secretions, e.g. after sneezing.
- ▶ Cover mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing.
- ▶ No spitting. Always wrap nasal and mouth discharges with tissue paper, and dispose of the tissue paper properly in rubbish bin.
- ▶ Wear mask when symptoms of respiratory tract infection or fever develop. Seek medical advice promptly. Refrain from work or school if develop symptoms of flu.
- ▶ Build up body resistance to prevent influenza infection. To do so, maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly and have plenty of rest, and avoid overstress and smoking.

### Observe environmental hygiene

- ▶ Maintain good ventilation of indoor areas.
- ▶ When influenza is prevalent, avoid attending crowded and poorly ventilated public places, such as restaurants and shopping centres.

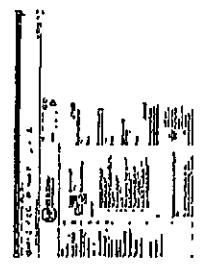
## Vaccination

- ▶ Influenza vaccine is prepared according to the virus strains prevalent in the community each year, as recommended by the World Health Organization.



Centre for Health Protection Website

[www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk)



24-Hour Health Education Helpline  
of the Department of Health

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Printed 2005