

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (221) in DH CDB/8/19/1  
來函檔號 Your Ref :  
電話 Tel. :  
傳真 Fax No. :

12 March 2025

Dear Principals / Persons-in-charge,

**Vigilance against acute gastroenteritis (AGE) during travel**

In view of recent increased or high activity level of infectious gastroenteritis in neighbouring regions of Hong Kong (including Japan, Singapore, the Mainland, Taiwan, etc.), the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) would like to appeal to teachers and students who are planning or participating in study/exchange tour to remain vigilant and maintain personal, environmental and food hygiene at all times to minimise the risk of being infected and prevent AGE.

Viral gastroenteritis is more commonly seen in cooler months and can be caused by a variety of viruses, most commonly norovirus and rotavirus. The main symptoms of viral gastroenteritis are diarrhoea and vomiting. Other symptoms include headache, fever, and abdominal cramps. In general, the symptoms begin one to two days following infection with a virus that causes gastroenteritis. Depending on the type of viruses causing the illness, however, the symptoms may last for one to 10 days.

The virus can be transmitted through various channels such as eating contaminated food, contact with vomitus or faecal matter of infected persons, and contact with contaminated objects, which may lead to a large-scale outbreak. Vomiting in a confined space with suboptimal ventilation poses a potential risk for an outbreak. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to properly and promptly clean up vomitus, and thoroughly disinfect the environment.

**To prevent AGE outbreaks, strict personal, food and environmental hygiene, with particular attention to handling of vomitus and faecal matter, are very important. Alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses frequently causing AGE (e.g. norovirus).** The CHP would like to recommend teachers and students participating in study/exchange tour to take the following steps:

1. Before the tour:
  - Ensure proper personal, food and environmental hygiene;
  - If feeling unwell, the person should seek medical advice promptly, and follow doctor's advice on whether it is suitable to participate.
2. Maintain personal and hand hygiene. Wash hand with liquid soap and



water, and rub for at least 20 seconds before meals and after going to the toilet. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel or hand dryer.

3. Maintain proper food hygiene. When eating out, the following points should be observed:
  - Wash hands thoroughly before consumption of food, or after using the toilet;
  - Pay attention to food hygiene, for instance, avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked.
4. Stay away from places contaminated with vomits or crowded places as much as possible.
5. Proper management of the environment after vomiting incidents:
  - Keep other individuals away from the affected area during the cleaning process;
  - Wear gloves and a surgical mask throughout the disinfection procedure.
  - Discard all food if vomiting and diarrhoea occurs in an area where open food is displayed;
  - Remove the bulky waste cautiously from all soiled linens and clothing, soak them in 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of 5.25% sodium hypochlorite bleach with 49 parts of water) for 30 minutes and then wash thoroughly. If immediate washing cannot be arranged, place the soiled linens and clothing inside sealed bags and wash them as soon as possible. Wash hands thoroughly afterwards.
6. If feeling unwell after returning to Hong Kong, the person should seek medical advice as soon as possible, and provide travel details to the doctor.

If you notice an increase in number of staff/students/children with symptoms of AGE, please inform the Central Notification Office of the CHP as early as possible (Fax: 2477 2770; Tel: 2477 2772; Email: diseases@dh.gov.hk) so that prompt investigation and control measures can be initiated accordingly.

Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr Albert AU)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health