

PRESS RELEASE
HAND-FOOT-MOUTH DISEASE UPDATE

By Sarawak Health Department
9th March, 2006

Sarawak Health Department would like to inform the public that since the last Press release on 7th March 2006 the total number of reported cases in Sarawak is 3461, as of 08th March 2006. The most cumulative number of cases were reported from Sibu (1561) Bintulu (530), Kuching (411), Miri (288) and Sarikei (254). The total daily number of HFMD cases reported is 192 – Sibu (60), Sarikei (37), Bintulu and Kuching (26 each) and Mukah (20). There were 5 deaths associated with HFMD of which two are positive for EV71 presently. A cumulative total of 452 HFMD cases had been admitted to the wards. As of 08th March 2006, there are 58 HFMD cases admitted in the ward of whom 2 are critically ill.

The sentinel surveillance in collaboration with the Institute of Health and Community Medicine (IHCM) University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) is on going since 1997. Of all the specimens sent to IHCM as part of this surveillance system, the percentage positive for EV71 for Sibu and Kuching are 58% and 52% respectively.

Based on the available surveillance data, the HFMD in the State this year is due to EV71. As has been noted there is a 3 year cyclical trend for the EV71. In 1997 the total number of reported cases was 2628, in the year 2000 (3560) and in 2003 the total cases were 2113. In order to minimize the spread and severity of the HFMD as well as to reduce mortalities among young children in the State, drastic measures are being taken. All TADIKA and similar child care centres were ordered to close since 3rd March 2006 following the Press Conference by the Minister of Health and being monitored for the compliance to the order including improving sanitation and carrying out the disinfection of facilities and play objects or playground.

The State Education Department have also agreed to cooperate and render any assistance to Sarawak Health Department to undertake any measures to control the spread of HFMD among school children when the situation arise. There were a cumulative total of (9) Primary Schools closed throughout the State as of 8th March 2006 including Kuching (3), Mukah (3), Miri (2), and Limbang (1). Any schools found to have two or more HFMD cases among their students would be serve a closure notice to further reduce the spread of the disease among other students.

Because of the mode of transmission of HFMD, whereby it

1. Can only spread from human to human
2. Main method of spread is by
 - a. Direct contact with people having the illness
 - b. Hand to mouth
 - c. Inhalation of droplets spread by coughing and sneezing,

the Sarawak Health Department would like to advise members of the general public, especially those having young children, to take the following precautions to reduce their risk of getting infected:

1. Avoid all crowded places such as shopping centres, cinemas, swimming pool, etc
2. Observe strict personal hygiene
3. Wash hand thoroughly before eating, handling/preparing food and touching/handling small children
4. Ensure cleanliness in their homes and cleanliness of children's toys/used items

In addition to the above measures, parents of children with HFMD are advised not to send them to kindergartens, nurseries or play schools while they are ill to help reduce the spread of the disease. They are also advised to bring their children for early medical attention. If the child does not appear to be getting better or is getting more ill, parents are advised to bring the child back to their own doctor or to the nearest hospital for further medical examination and treatment.

Thus the Sarawak Health Department would like to advise the public to do the following:

1. Wash hands with soap and clean water after using the toilet, before preparing food, after changing diaper and washing faeces of children.
2. Cover the mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing.
3. Maintain cleanliness of house, child care centres, kindergartens or school surrounding.
4. Wash all toys and surfaces of tables, chairs, floors and so on that have been contaminated with saliva.
5. Bring children to the nearest clinic or hospital if they have the signs and symptoms of infection.
6. Parents are advised not to bring young children to crowded public places such as swimming pools, markets, bus station, etc.
7. Children who show signs and symptoms of infection;
 - a) Should refrain from going to child care centre and kindergarten or school and should be brought to clinic immediately for investigation.
 - b) Do not burst the blister.
 - c) Wash hands if dressing the blisters and emptying bowel.
 - d) Use a separate set of eating utensils.

Information regarding HFMD pertaining to Sarawak has been uploaded to the Sarawak Health Department Website since 5th March 2006 available at <http://www.sarawak.health.gov.my>