

New semester brings stronger measures against the pandemic – K12EA visits elementary school to demonstrate the 5 steps of handwashing

(Photo/Text by Hu Wen-Lin, Division of Student Affairs and School Security)



September marks the start of a new school year. This year, due to the continued threat of the severe pneumonia with novel pathogens pandemic, and the fact that enterovirus infections among school children peak around this time of the year, Wang Feng-Ying, the Chief Secretary of K12EA, visited Taichung Municipal Chung-Cheng Elementary School on September 9, 2020, to take part in their Enterovirus Prevention Campaign and reinforce the importance of teaching school children to use proper handwashing techniques. At the event, Mdm Wang personally demonstrated the five steps of handwashing and reminded both teachers and students of its importance when it comes to the prevention of diseases and protection against the pandemic, so that schools can become the safest place for children to learn.

K12EA, under MOE, pointed out that enteroviruses are highly infectious, and that they are primarily transmitted via the gastrointestinal or respiratory tract, or through contact with the bodily fluids of virus carriers and patients. These viruses are easily spread in places such as

schools, childcare centers, and homes. Thus, schools have been teaching children the five steps of proper handwashing, which are "wet, lather (for at least 20 seconds), rinse, hold, and dry". Schools have also been educating their students on the best times to wash their hands, which include after using the bathroom, before eating, before and after seeing a doctor, before hugging and feeding small children, after blowing their noses, and after playing games.

In addition to stepping up health education for students, K12EA also reminded parents and teachers to pay special attention to the hygiene practices of themselves and the children, and to observe whether they are exhibiting any early symptoms of serious diseases such as oversleeping, confusion, lethargy, weakness in the limbs, muscle spasms (getting frightened for no reason or sudden full-body muscle contractions), persistent vomiting, shortness of breath, and rapid heart rate. In the event that the above symptoms are observed, the patient ought to be sent to the hospital for the appropriate treatment without delay so as not to miss the window for effective treatment.

K12EA stated that the prevention and control of enteroviruses, severe pneumonia with novel pathogens, upper respiratory tract infections, and other contagious diseases require measures such as frequent handwashing, respiratory hygiene and coughing etiquette, and taking sick leave to be implemented even more effectively, so as to minimize cross-infection that might lead to a pandemic. Additionally, the public should familiarize itself with the 5 disease-prevention tips, namely, frequent handwashing, getting sufficient sleep, keeping toys clean, valuing personal hygiene, and seeking prompt medical attention. In addition, local departments and bureaus of education should also work with local health administrative agencies to ensure that schools boost educational efforts in disease-prevention, information campaigns, reporting, and tracking of enterovirus and other infectious diseases. At the end of the day, the prevention and control of infectious diseases in schools is nothing less than a team effort.