HFMD, dengue cases on the rise

By Teoh Pei Ying - May 17, 2022 @ 2:45pm

Cases of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) this year have increased 15-fold compared to last year. - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: Cases of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) this year have increased 15-fold compared to last year.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said a total of 31,661 HFMD cases were recorded in Malaysia up to the 19th Epidemiology Week compared to 2,121 cases recorded in 2021 over the same period of time.

"In comparing EW18 and EW19, HFMD cases had increased by 349 per cent where only 1,676 cases were reported in EW18 while 7,526 were registered in EW19.

"In 2022, as of May 14, Selangor had contributed the highest number of cases at 8,864, which is 28 per cent of the total cases, followed by Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, both reporting 4,421 cases (14 per cent).

"Sabah and Perak both contributed eight per cent and Kelantan had 2,493 cases as of May 14, which is 7.9 per cent of the total, while other states recorded around or below 1,500 cases," he said in a statement today.

Dr Noor Hisham said 889 HFMD outbreaks were reported in Malaysia during EW19.

He said 65 per cent of the outbreaks occurred at kindergartens, followed by private residences that contributed 34 per cent, and 27 outbreaks or three per cent happened at child care centres.

An outbreak is when two or more cases are detected in one locality and the case is related to epidemiology which at the same time happened within the incubation period of HFMD.

He added that 94 per cent of the HFMD cases involved children aged six-years-old and below while five per cent of the cases involved children aged between seven and 12-years-old.

Dr Noor Hisham explained that HFMD is linked to self and environmental hygiene.

"This disease is highly contagious and almost 100 per cent of the cases involve children aged 10-years-old and below, especially at premises such as kindergartens and schools.

"Hence, the Health Ministry would like to urge parents or guardians of children with HFMD symptoms to not bring them to public places, schools, kindergartens or child care centres as they will spread the disease.

"Bring their children to the doctor for treatment; wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet, change diapers, treat blisters; disinfect their toys, floors particularly the toilet with chlorine -based products and do not share utensils with other children who are not infected.

"As for kindergartens and childcare centres, the management is advised to practice gate-keeping to ensure all the children are free from HFMD symptoms before allowing them to enter their respective premises," he said.

He said the Health Ministry is monitoring HFMD and is working with other relevant ministries and agencies in taking control and preventive actions.

"Among actions that have been taken by the state health departments and district health offices include sending out alert letters to all departments and agencies that are overseeing kindergartens and childcare centres at state and district levels.

"This includes having briefing sessions with the kindergartens, childcare centres and school management to increase their awareness and knowledge on HFMD and the status in their respective areas, and disseminating HFMD information via infographic on social media and communication applications as well as radio and television," he said.

He said as HFMD is a communicable disease and needs to be notified as stated in the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988.

"A member of the public can inform HFMD cases at kindergartens or schools to the district health offices," he said.

Meanwhile, he said, dengue cases had also increased, by 51.5 per cent in EW19 where 1,074 cases were reported compared to 709 cases registered in EW18.

He said a total of 14,725 dengue cases were recorded up to EW19 compared to 10,139 in 2021, which was a 45.2 per cent increase.

"Nine deaths were reported up to EW19 this year while five deaths were recorded last year for the same timeframe."