

HFMD spread: Kindergarten closed

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SINGAPORE — Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is on the rise again here, with a Hougang kindergarten ordered to close for 10 days to curb its spread.

HFMD has been at epidemic levels here for the past seven weeks. Last week, 906 cases were reported, bringing the total number this year to 18,007 — 67 per cent higher than the same period last year.

On Friday, the Ministry of Health (MOH) announced on its website that the Nativity Church Kindergarten will be closed until Aug 22.

The mandatory 10-day closure applies to childcare centres or kindergartens with over 16 HFMD cases or infection rate of 23 per cent of enrolment, and a transmission period of over 24 days.

Two other childcare centres, Pat's Schoolhouse at Arena Country Club in Upper Jurong and Star Learners@Sembawang, were also named on the ministry's website as they had over 10 HFMD cases or an infection rate exceeding 13 per cent, as well as a transmission period of over 16 days.

The Nativity Church Kindergarten office was closed when MediaCorp paid it a visit on Friday afternoon but a church

helper said its teachers had spent Thursday night calling parents to inform them of the closure.

Pat's Schoolhouse founder-director Patricia Koh said its Arena branch has been in the clear for over 10 days, with no new cases since Aug 3.

Only 1.3 per cent of the cases so far have required hospitalisation but the MOH has detected a rise in circulation of the virulent Enterovirus 71.

The ministry said publishing the list of childcare institutions — which will be updated every Wednesday and Friday — would increase awareness among parents.

More than 900 cases of HFMD were reported last week, bringing the total to 18,007 this year — 67 per cent higher than the same period last year.

It urged parents to maintain hygiene and to consult a doctor if their child has fever, mouth ulcers and rashes on the palms, soles or buttocks. Children with HFMD should remain at home until all blisters have dried up.