

CFS proactively follows up on food poisoning clusters involving sandwiches

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (August 19) that it is proactively following up on two food poisoning clusters involving sandwiches, including inspecting the food factory concerned. A sample of smoked salmon collected from the premises was found to contain a pathogen, Group D Salmonella. The CFS is following up on the case.

"Upon notification by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health earlier, the CFS immediately sent staff to the food factory concerned in Fo Tan to conduct investigation and take food and environmental samples for testing. The CFS has instructed the premises to stop selling and discard the food item concerned immediately. The CFS has also provided health education on food safety and hygiene to the person-in-charge and staff, and instructed them to suspend operation in order to carry out thorough cleaning and disinfection, as well as to implement improvement measures to ensure food safety," a CFS spokesman said.

The test result showed the presence of Salmonella in 25 grams of the smoked salmon sample, exceeding the criterion of the Microbiological Guidelines for Food which states that Salmonella should not be detected in 25g of a ready-to-eat food sample. The CFS conducted source tracing of the incriminated batch of smoked salmon and collected a sample at the importer level for testing. The test result was satisfactory, i.e. no Salmonella spp. was detected in 25g of the smoked salmon sample. The CFS has informed the food factory concerned of the unsatisfactory test result. The premises is now still closed to implement improvement measures.

According to section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), all food available for sale in Hong Kong, imported or locally produced, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

"Salmonella infection may cause fever and gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea. The effects on infants, young children, the elderly and persons with a weak immune system could be more severe and may even lead to death," the spokesman said.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health.

Granting of childcare vaccination leave of not more than half a day to government employees for accompanying young children to receive COVID-19 vaccination on working days

In order to encourage parents to arrange for the COVID-19 vaccination of their children aged six months to less than three years as early as possible, starting from August 22, government employees will be granted childcare vaccination leave of not more than half a day for accompanying children aged below three, as their parents or guardians, to receive the vaccination on a working day.

A Government spokesman said, "In view of the rapid spread of the mutant strains, parents should arrange for COVID-19 vaccination of their young children as early as possible. As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government has a duty to take the lead and introduce a family-friendly measure to encourage and facilitate government employees who are parents or guardians of young children to act fast and arrange for their children to get vaccinated for early protection. We also appeal to employers of other enterprises to provide convenience for their employees as far as possible and encourage parents to arrange for COVID-19 vaccination of their young children as a concerted effort to boost the vaccination rate of young children and further strengthen the overall protective barrier in the community."

Starting from August 22, all government employees including civil servants, non-civil service contract staff and post-retirement service contract staff will be granted authorised absence for not more than half a day on each occasion they accompany each of their eligible children aged below three to receive the vaccination as a parent or guardian. For government employees who have taken their own vacation leave to bring children aged below three to get vaccinated as a parent or guardian before August 22, they may also be retrospectively granted a half-day authorised absence by application. The Government will review the arrangement in due course.

Kai Tak Community Isolation Facility

commences operation

The Kai Tak Community Isolation Facility (CIF), managed by the Security Bureau (SB)'s anti-epidemic task force, commenced operation today (August 19). About 60 confirmed COVID-19 patients with no or mild symptoms had been admitted as at 6pm.

The numbers of daily new cases in Hong Kong remain high at four-digit figures and the occupancy rate of the Penny's Bay CIF has reached nearly 80 per cent, accommodating over 6 500 occupants currently. To provide additional quarantine units, the Government opened the Kai Tak CIF in support of the anti-epidemic work.

The Kai Tak CIF provides over 2 700 units in total including some large rooms formed by combining two or three units for use by big families, and accessible units for persons with disabilities. Both the Penny's Bay CIF and the Kai Tak CIF are managed by the SB's anti-epidemic task force, which comprises members of the SB and the Civil Aid Service, retirees of various disciplinary forces and Housekeeping Assistants employed on a non-civil service contract term basis. To enhance the services provided for the occupants, both the Penny's Bay CIF and the Kai Tak CIF adopt a small-district management approach to provide speedy services such as supplies delivery and manning of telephone hotlines. Designated personnel are also assigned to handle care hotlines and visits in respective zones in order to provide services in a people-oriented manner.

In addition to the Penny's Bay and Kai Tak CIFs, two community isolation hotels are also managed by the SB's anti-epidemic task force. The SB will, having regard to the utilisation of the CIFs, review the relevant management issues including enhancing manpower and supplies arrangements constantly to provide adequate support to the users.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 0.00am today (August 19), a total of 1 898 patients who tested positive for COVID-19 are currently hospitalised for treatment, including 258 new patients. Among the patients staying in isolation facilities, 512 patients are in isolation wards, 146 patients are in second-tier isolation wards and 608 patients are in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection

Control Centre, of which 206 in total are new patients. There are six newly reported critical patients and six newly reported serious patients. There are a total of 36 patients in critical condition and 25 are in serious condition, of which 10 critical patients are receiving intensive care. Moreover, there are 237 patients who have recovered, including 206 patients who have been discharged. In addition, eight patients who passed away in public hospitals were reported.

In the fifth wave of the epidemic, there are 59 333 patients who have recovered so far, including 59 034 patients who have been discharged. And since early 2020, there are 71 713 patients who have recovered, including 71 414 patients who have been discharged.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Government enforces “restriction-testing declaration” and compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tower 3, Island Resort, Siu Sai Wan

The Government yesterday (August 18) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 5pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Siu Sai Wan (i.e. Tower 3, Island Resort, Siu Sai Wan (only including the 6/F Podium and floors above)) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. In addition, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday to any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from August 12 to 18, 2022, to undergo compulsory testing on or before August 20, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect.

The Government finished the compulsory testing exercise at around 8.15am today (August 19) and is now carrying out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" to verify that all people in the "restricted area" have

undergone compulsory testing. The Government will further announce the revocation time of the declaration.

Starting from around 8.15am today, persons in the specified "restricted area" in Siu Sai Wan who have undergone testing and are able to present SMS notifications with negative test results as proof of having undergone testing may leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer.

The Government set up temporary specimen collection stations in the "restricted area" yesterday and requested persons subject to compulsory testing to collect combined nasal and throat swab samples at the stations to undergo a COVID-19 virus test before 10.30pm yesterday. A total of 824 people within the "restricted area" had undergone testing. Amongst them, six cases tested positive. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will arrange to follow up.

Regarding the case tested positive in the specified "restricted area", the Government has provided additional food packs, disinfection products, rapid antigen test kits and masks pending follow-up arrangement.

Moreover, the Government also assigned staff to visit 400 households in the "restricted area", among which 95 households did not answer the door. The Government will take measures to follow up.

The Government reiterates that enforcement actions will be taken seriously. Any person who fails to present an SMS notification with a test result as proof of having undergone testing breaches the compulsory testing notice and may be liable to a fine of \$10,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him/her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.