

CHP investigates suspected food poisoning case related to wild mushrooms

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 25) investigating a suspected case of food poisoning related to the consumption of wild mushrooms, and urged the public not to pick and eat wild mushrooms.

The case involves two females aged 36 and 61, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting about two and a half hours after consuming mushrooms at home on May 24. They sought medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Department of North Lantau Hospital on the same day and were admitted to the hospital for further management. They have been in stable condition.

Initial investigations revealed that the patients picked the wild mushrooms that they consumed from a hillside somewhere in Tung Chung on May 24. The CHP's investigation is ongoing.

"Members of the public should not pick wild mushrooms for consumption as it is difficult to distinguish edible mushroom species from inedible ones," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Mushroom poisoning is generally acute. Common presentations include gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain appearing shortly after ingestion. Depending on the mushroom species, patients may also have other symptoms such as profuse sweating, hallucinations, coma or other neurological symptoms, as well as liver failure. Death may result in severe cases," he added.

"If mushroom poisoning is suspected, the patient should seek immediate medical attention and bring along any available remnant for identification," the spokesman said.

Speech by SJ at opening ceremony of AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, at the opening ceremony of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration

Centre today (May 25):

Good evening. Commissioner Liu (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Liu Guangyuan), Director Chan (Director of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre, Mr Nick Chan), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you all as we celebrate the opening of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre today.

Last year, with substantial support from the Central People's Government, Hong Kong had the privilege to host the 59th Annual Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), where Premier Li Keqiang announced the establishment of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre.

In 1974, AALCO had incredible foresight, deciding to forge ahead in developing institutional arbitration in the Asian and African regions. Since then, five regional arbitration centres of AALCO have been established, functioning as international institutions with the objectives of developing institutional arbitration and promoting international commercial arbitration in the Asian-African regions, and rendering assistance in ad hoc arbitrations, particularly those held under the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules. The AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre marks the sixth such centre to continue this important mandate.

The decision to establish a regional arbitration centre, particularly one in Hong Kong, is a result of extensive deliberations, negotiations and co-ordination since 2018, when AALCO resolved to establish a new arbitration centre in the Southeast Asian region. Hong Kong is honoured to be able to host the sixth AALCO regional arbitration centre, and it is my hope that it will, together with the existing AALCO arbitration centres in Malaysia, Egypt, Nigeria, Iran and Kenya, stand united by the ideals of friendship and collaboration by promoting trade and investment in the Asian-African region. All of this cannot be accomplished without the support and trust of the Central People's Government. Indeed, the establishment of the Centre constitutes a significant vote of confidence in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's position as a leading centre for international legal, dealmaking and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, and its role in China's development as reflected in its 14th Five-Year Plan.

The establishment of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre further enhances Hong Kong's status as a centre for international legal, dealmaking and dispute resolution services, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. This very nice space we are presently occupying will also form part of the Hong Kong Legal Hub, bringing together global expertise in the legal and dispute resolution community, and developing synergy between the legal, dispute resolution and business communities.

The AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre is unique in the sense that not only will it seek to integrate itself into AALCO's dispute settlement system, but the Centre will also promote the growth and effective

functioning of arbitration institutions and other alternative dispute resolution services, including online dispute resolution, which I believe is a global trend. Through the Centre's future work, I hope that more and more businesses can see the value of using online dispute resolution to resolve disputes, particularly when the pandemic has taught us the vital lesson of the need to utilise technology effectively. In fact, it is my understanding that the Arbitration Rules of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre are explicitly designed for the use of online dispute resolution to provide a cost-effective and speedy resolution for disputes.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, to conclude I offer my wholehearted congratulations on the opening of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre, and wish it all the best in all of its future endeavours. The Department of Justice looks forward to working with the Centre and the legal and dispute resolution community to promote Hong Kong as an international legal and dispute resolution hub, which I believe will be beneficial to all. Thank you very much.

[Update on monitoring COVID-19 vaccination](#)

In the preceding week till 11.59pm on May 22, the Department of Health (DH) received 28 reports (Note 1) of adverse events following COVID-19 immunisation. No death case was reported by the Hospital Authority (HA) involving individuals who had received vaccines within 14 days before they passed away and had potential association with vaccination.

As at 8pm on May 22, around 16.68 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered for members of the public. Around 6.69 million people had received at least one dose of vaccine, including 93.2 per cent of the population aged 12 or above. The DH received 7 511 reports of adverse events (0.05 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered). Among the death cases concerning persons who had been vaccinated, including 104 cases (Note 2) with vaccination within 14 days before they passed away (0.0006 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered), none of the death cases was associated with vaccination.

As at May 22, the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation had concluded that 61 death cases had no causal relationship with vaccination, and preliminarily considered that 11 cases were not associated with vaccination. Thirty-two cases are still pending further information for assessment. The Expert Committee considered that there is no unusual pattern identified so far, and will continue to closely monitor the relevant situation and collect data for assessment.

According to information from the HA, during the period from April 25 to May 22, the ratio of death cases out of those without a vaccination record was 242.4 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases for those with a vaccination record was 29.1 cases for every 100 000 people. Out of those without a vaccination record, the ratio of death cases with acute stroke or acute myocardial infarction was 7.6 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases under the same category for those with a vaccination record was 1.7 cases for every 100 000 people. Furthermore, the ratio of miscarriage cases out of those without a vaccination record was 127.0 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of miscarriage cases for those who had a vaccination record was 10.2 cases for every 100 000 people. Based on the statistical analysis of the above figures, there is no evidence that vaccination increases the risk of death or miscarriage for recipients. The relevant reference statistics will be uploaded to the thematic website for the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

The majority of non-death cases of adverse events received so far are relatively minor cases. The relevant details can be found in the "Report on the Safety Monitoring of COVID-19 Vaccines in Hong Kong" (www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/doc/Safety_Monitoring_of_COVID-19_Vaccines_in_Hong_Kong.pdf).

A Government spokesman said, "Given the high transmissibility of the Omicron mutant strain, members of the public must still stay vigilant even if the epidemic situation has subsided a little recently. Deaths and severe cases involving children and elderly persons, who are our focus of protection in vaccination, have been recorded in the fifth wave of the epidemic. For elderly persons, the COVID-19 vaccination rate for the elderly aged 80 or above in Hong Kong is only around 67 per cent at present, meaning that around 33 per cent of the elderly in that age group are in a dangerous situation, which is alarming.

"According to preliminary data analysis, out of the cases reported in the fifth wave, over 95 per cent of the fatal cases are elderly people aged 60 or above, with the proportion of death and hospitalised cases being the highest in those aged 80 or above. Most of the deceased cases are unvaccinated persons. As compared to the Hong Kong overall population, those who have received three doses of vaccine account for a much lower proportion among reported cases, and an extremely low proportion among the hospitalised critical/serious and deceased cases. This demonstrates the effectiveness of three doses of vaccine in preventing infection, serious illness and fatality from COVID-19. Even with just the first dose of vaccine, the risk of death can be significantly reduced. The latest research data from the University of Hong Kong also shows that receiving three doses of either the Comirnaty or CoronaVac vaccine is highly effective for preventing severe cases and deaths with over 90 per cent effectiveness. Members of the public who are currently eligible for a third dose should get the third dose as soon as possible.

"Furthermore, in response to the latest advice from experts, we have started the administration of the fourth vaccine dose for persons aged 60 or above who have received three doses of the Comirnaty or CoronaVac vaccine.

They may receive the fourth dose no less than three months after their last dose. For persons aged 18 to 59 with a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure, or a greater risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of their occupational setting, they may choose to receive a fourth dose no less than six months from their third dose. Members of the public may also receive a fourth dose due to personal needs (such as studying abroad or travelling). On the other hand, the minimum age for receiving the CoronaVac vaccine has been lowered to 3 years old, while the minimum age for receiving the Comirnaty vaccine is 5 years old. We call on parents to arrange vaccination for their children as early as possible for better protection."

Note 1: Provisional figures. In the preceding week till 11.59pm on May 22, the DH did not receive any reports of suspected myocarditis or pericarditis involving adolescents in the age group of 3 to 15.

Note 2: In the preceding week till 11.59pm on May 22, the DH received one death report involving an individual who had received COVID-19 vaccination within 14 days before passing away. The case involved a male aged 93. There is no clinical evidence that the incident arose from vaccination.

[Update on supplies from Mainland](#)

The Task Force of Supplies from the Mainland led by the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) has been working closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government to explore various means to stabilise the supply of goods from the Mainland to Hong Kong. In addition to road transport arrangements, transportation of goods by water and railway is already in service.

A spokesperson for the THB said that the "Sea Express" water transportation service from the Mainland to Hong Kong has been fully launched and its capacity is rising to increase the supplies of fresh food, other daily necessities and manufacturing materials. The current supply of fresh food from the Mainland is stable.

Currently, there are three water transportation routes between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, namely (1) from Shenzhen Yantian International Container Terminals to Hong Kong Kwai Tsing Container Terminals (KTCT); (2) from Shenzhen DaChan Bay Terminals to KTCT; and (3) from China Merchants Port (South China) Management Center (Shenzhen Mawan, Shekou and Chiwan Container Terminals) to Hong Kong River Trade Terminal and elsewhere. Together with the water transportation routes from other cities in Guangdong Province, including the routes from Guangzhou Lianhuashan Port, Nansha Port, Huadu Port, Zhongshan Huangpu Port and Zhuhai Doumen Port to different terminals in Hong Kong, the water transport capacity amounts to tens of thousands of tonnes daily.

The spokesperson said today (May 25) that Shenzhen operated 62 cargo vessel trips and transported around 5 300 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cross-boundary supplies by water yesterday (May 24), equivalent to about 29 000 tonnes of goods, of which around 10 TEUs (about 20 tonnes) were fresh food and around 5 290 TEUs (about 28 980 tonnes) were non-fresh food, according to information from the Mainland authorities.

Since the launch of services from the three ports in Shenzhen since February 18 to yesterday, a total of around 417 580 TEUs of cross-boundary supplies have been transported, equivalent to about 2 108 010 tonnes of goods, of which around 1 760 TEUs (about 15 040 tonnes) were fresh food and around 415 820 TEUs (about 2 092 970 tonnes) were non-fresh food.

To further ensure a stable goods supply to Hong Kong through land transport, a trial run of cargo transfer was conducted by the THB at a yard situated on Kam Pok Road, San Tin, Yuen Long, and it was completed smoothly. The THB will continue to work with the Mainland authorities to fully take forward cargo transfer arrangements on the Hong Kong side. It is a contingency measure in response to the latest epidemic situation in the city so as to reduce the risk of epidemic transmission in both the Mainland and Hong Kong, ensuring both smooth cross-boundary land transport and a stable goods supply to Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, to avoid a spillover of the epidemic, the Transport Department (TD) has arranged for dedicated staff to conduct rapid antigen tests for cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers at various land boundary control points (BCPs) from February 28 onwards. Only drivers with a negative result are allowed to enter the Mainland. In order to further improve the accuracy of the tests, the TD has already switched to use rapid nucleic acid tests at the BCPs. Starting from April 21, the sampling method for rapid nucleic acid tests has been further changed to nasopharyngeal swabs. A total of 3 192 rapid nucleic acid tests were conducted yesterday in which 26 drivers preliminarily tested positive. The TD has passed the cases to the Department of Health for follow-up.

The THB will closely monitor the situation and co-operate with the Mainland authorities to facilitate and implement various measures to ensure a stable goods supply to Hong Kong, with a view to complementing the supply through road, water and railway transport, enhancing capacity and efficiency as well as optimising the flow of cross-boundary supplies.

[Money changer and its director as well](#)

as one man and two women convicted of operating money service without licence

Hong Kong Customs earlier detected two cases of unlicensed money service operation. A money changer and its director were fined \$10,000 and \$12,000 respectively at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts while on the other hand a man and two women were sentenced to community service of 80 to 160 hours at Fanling Magistrates' Courts.

In the first case, Customs officers in December 2020 conducted an investigation and found that a male director had been operating remittance business at a money changer in Hung Hom after expiry of the money service operator licence. The director and the money changer were suspected of operating a money service without a licence. The male director was fined \$10,000 in January this year while the money changer was fined \$12,000 today (May 25) after they were convicted at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts.

In the second case, Customs officers in May last year initiated an investigation against a man and his wife who were suspected of operating remittance business without a licence via a social media platform page. After in-depth investigation, Customs officers discovered that the remittance business was operated by using the bank account of the man's mother-in-law. The three persons were sentenced to community service of 80 to 160 hours at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today.

Under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance, a person who operates a remittance and/or money changing service needs to first obtain a licence from the Customs and Excise Department. The maximum penalty for such operators without a valid licence upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Customs reminds consumers to procure services from licensed money service operators. A register of licensees is accessible from the website of Customs' Money Service Operators Licensing System at eservices.customs.gov.hk/MSOS/wsrh/001s1?request_locale=en.

Members of the public may report any suspected unlicensed money service operation to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).