

Case of ginkgo seed poisoning under CHP investigation

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 5) investigating a case of ginkgo seed poisoning and hence reminded members of the public not to consume large amounts of ginkgo seeds.

The case involves a 38-year-old woman, who developed dizziness, nausea, tremor, headache and abdominal pain about one and a half hours after consuming around 50 to 60 fried ginkgo seeds purchased from a street hawker in Prince Edward on November 3. The patient was admitted to United Christian Hospital yesterday (November 4) and was discharged after treatment on the same day. She has been in a stable condition all along.

"Natural toxins are present in a wide variety of plants, some of which are commonly consumed as food, including ginkgo seeds. Ginkgo seeds contain toxins which are mainly neurotoxic. Vomiting, irritability and tonic or clonic convulsions are the typical symptoms in ginkgo seed poisoning and usually begin one to 12 hours after ingestion. Children are especially susceptible to this type of food poisoning. In severe cases where large amounts have been taken or in susceptible individuals, loss of consciousness and death may occur," a spokesman for the CHP explained.

"It has been reported that ingestion of 10 to 50 pieces of cooked ginkgo seeds at one time can cause acute poisoning in humans. The unripe and uncooked seeds are more toxic and the toxicity is reduced after cooking," the spokesman added.

The spokesman appealed to the public not to consume raw ginkgo seeds and should limit the intake. Particular attention should be given to children, the elderly and individuals with poor health conditions. If symptoms of poisoning develop, they should immediately consult medical professionals for advice and prompt treatment.