

CFS follows up on US powdered infant formula with possible contamination of Cronobacter sakazakii and Salmonella Newport

A spokesman for the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (February 18) that the CFS noted notifications from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the United States (US) that authorities are investigating several cases of infant infections of Cronobacter sakazakii (previously named Enterobacter sakazakii) and Salmonella Newport, suspected to be related to the consumption of several kinds of powdered infant formula produced from Abbott Nutrition's Surgis, Michigan facility. Initial investigation of the CFS found that the affected product had not been imported into or put on sale in Hong Kong.

According to the information from the US FDA, the affected Abbott Nutrition products are Similac, Alimentum, and EleCare powdered infant formulas. The authorities advised consumers not to use the concerned products if:

- (1) the first two digits of the code are 22 through 37; and
- (2) the code on the container contains K8, SH or Z2; and
- (3) the expiration date is April 2022 or later.

"Upon learning of the incident, the CFS has followed up with the sole importer of the product concerned in Hong Kong. The importer informed the CFS that the aforesaid products had not been imported into Hong Kong. Furthermore, the CFS has contacted major local importers immediately and so far has not found any affected products being imported into Hong Kong. The CFS has also contacted major local retailers and conducted sales checks at local outlets. No affected product was found available for sale so far," the spokesman said.

The CFS has collected over 210 samples of infant milk powder for microbiological testing (including Cronobacter sakazakii and Salmonella) in the past three years (2019-2021) under its routine food surveillance programme. The results were all satisfactory.

Powdered infant formula is not a sterile product which may be contaminated with pathogens such as salmonella and Cronobacter sakazakii. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/World Health Organization advise that powdered infant formula should be prepared with boiled water that is no cooler than 70 degree Celsius which can significantly inactivate pathogens including Salmonella. Reconstituted powdered infant formula should then be cooled to feeding temperature and consumed immediately. Reconstituted powdered infant formula that has not been consumed within two hours should be discarded. On the other hand, for high-risk infants, including pre-term infants, infants less than two months of age,

low-birth-weight infants (< 2.5 kilograms) and immunocompromised infants etc, who are not breastfed, caregivers should use commercially sterile liquid formula whenever possible.

The CFS will continue to follow up the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.