

CFS found excessive Vibrio parahaemolyticus in sample of clam in preserved fish sauce

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (September 5) that it is actively following up on food poisoning clusters involving clam in preserved fish sauce, including inspecting the food premises concerned. A sample of clam in preserved fish sauce collected from the food premises concerned was found to contain an excessive amount of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*. 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 premises concerned in Mong Kok to conduct an investigation and collected a sample of clam in preserved fish sauce and sent to laboratory for testing. The test result showed that the sample contained *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* at a level of 1 400 000 per gram. According to the Microbiological Guidelines for Food, if ready-to-eat food contains *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* at a level of more than 1 000 per gram, it is considered unsatisfactory," a CFS spokesman said.

The CFS has informed the food premises concerned of the irregularity. The food premises concerned have already stopped selling and discarded the affected product according to the CFS's advice. The CFS has also provided health education on food safety and hygiene to the person-in-charge and staff of the food premises concerned, and requested that they review and improve the food production process and carry out thorough cleaning and disinfection. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence.

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.

"*Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, a common bacterium that can cause food poisoning, is naturally present in seawater and often found in seafood. Food poisoning caused by this pathogenic bacterium is usually associated with consumption of undercooked or raw seafood, in particular shellfish, or improperly handled food that is contaminated with bacteria. Common symptoms of food poisoning caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, including diarrhoea, vomiting, mild fever and abdominal pain, usually occur within one or two days after consumption of contaminated food. Recovery is usually within a few days. Nonetheless, children, the elderly, pregnant women and those with a weaker immune system are more likely to develop severe symptoms," the spokesman said.

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