

CFS proactively follows up on suspected food poisoning cases involving sandwiches

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (May 28) that it has been proactively following up on the suspected food poisoning outbreak involving sandwiches produced in Hong Kong with the Environmental Hygiene Branch (EHB) of the FEHD, including inspecting retail outlets and tracing the distribution of the affected product. All the premises concerned had stopped sale of the affected product according to the CFS' advice. Moreover, two sandwich samples taken from the Tsuen Wan retail outlet of the sandwich concerned were found to contain a pathogen, Salmonella. The CFS is following up on the case.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "Upon notification of the incident by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health on May 21, the CFS immediately sent staff to the retail outlets and the food factory of the affected product to follow up. A press release was also issued on the same day to urge the public not to consume the sandwiches concerned, and ask the trade to stop using or selling the product concerned immediately. So far, the CFS, according to the information provided by the manufacturer, has investigated a total of 12 premises (including the food factory) that sold the product, and all of them had stopped sale of the affected product according to the CFS' advice. The CFS has also provided health education on food safety and hygiene to the person-in-charge and staff concerned, and requested them to carry out a thorough cleaning and disinfection.

"Moreover, the manufacturer was suspected of operating an unlicensed food factory. Prosecution had been instituted against the person-in-charge of the premises by the FEHD earlier. The CFS had instructed the food premises to stop production of the product. Checks conducted by the EHB revealed that the food premises concerned has suspended business since May 21."

The spokesman pointed out that so far all the reported cases had the sandwiches bought before investigation as well as preventive and control measures instituted by the CFS.

The spokesman urged the public again not to consume the product concerned, regardless of batches and flavours. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected product immediately if still in possession.

According to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food for sale in Hong Kong, whether locally produced or imported, 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 patients with a weak immune system can be more severe and sometimes may even lead to death," the spokesman said.

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