

CHP investigates case of mad honey poisoning

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 6) investigating a case of mad honey poisoning, and reminded the public to buy honey from a reliable source or apiary.

A 44-year-old female developed bradycardia, hypotension and dizziness around 30 minutes after consuming honey on October 31. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Mary Hospital and was admitted for treatment. The patient was in stable condition and discharged on November 1. Her clinical diagnosis was mad honey poisoning.

Grayanotoxin was detected in the honey remnant and the patient's urine sample upon testing.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient brought the honey from Nepal to Hong Kong. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

"Mad honey poisoning is caused by ingestion of honey containing grayanotoxins derived from plants belonging to the Ericaceae family, including rhododendrons. Grayanotoxins are neurotoxins which can affect nerves and muscles. Symptoms of poisoning include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, dizziness, weakness, excessive perspiration, hypersalivation and paraesthesia shortly after ingestion. In severe cases, hypotension, bradycardia or shock may occur," a spokesman for the CHP explained.

Members of the public are reminded to take heed of the following preventive advice:

- Buy honey from a reliable source or apiary;
- Discard honey with a bitter or astringent taste – grayanotoxin-containing honey may cause a burning sensation in the throat; and
- Pay special attention to honey from India, Nepal and the Black Sea region of Türkiye as there have been grayanotoxin poisoning cases connected with honey from these areas.