

CHP investigates case of Shiga toxin-producing E. coli infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 7) investigating a case of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) infection, and hence reminded the public to maintain good personal, food and environmental hygiene against intestinal infections.

The case involves a 28-year-old woman with underlying illness, who presented with abdominal pain and bloody diarrhoea on December 3, 2021. The patient visited the Tuen Mun Yan Oi General Out-patient Clinic on December 17 and was admitted to Tuen Mun Hospital for medical treatment on December 25. She was discharged on December 27 and is in stable condition.

Her stool specimen grew STEC upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries of the CHP revealed that the patient had no travel history during the incubation period. Investigations are ongoing.

"Escherichia coli (E. coli) is a bacterium that is commonly found in the gut of humans and warm-blooded animals. Most strains of E. coli are harmless. Some strains, however, such as STEC, can produce powerful toxins and cause severe food-borne disease. The most recognised serogroup of STEC is E. coli O157:H7," a spokesman for the CHP explained.

Preventive measures for STEC infection are similar to those recommended for other food-borne diseases. The public are advised to observe good personal and food hygiene:

- Adopt the Five Keys to Food Safety in handling food, i.e. Choose (choose safe raw materials), Clean (keep hands and utensils clean), Separate (separate raw and cooked food), Cook (cook thoroughly) and Safe Temperature (keep food at a safe temperature) to prevent food-borne diseases;
- Wash hands properly with liquid soap and water before handling food, after handling raw meat or poultry and before eating, and after going to the toilet or changing diapers;
- Cook food and boil water thoroughly before consumption. When cooking or reheating, the core temperature of the food should reach at least 75 degrees Celsius;
- Avoid consumption of unpasteurised milk or undercooked food; and
- Consult your doctor immediately if you have symptoms of STEC infection, particularly bloody diarrhoea.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [STEC page](#) for more information.