

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 18) 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 7-year-old girl with good past health, who presented with abdominal pain on January 3 and diarrhoea on the following day. She attended Gleneagles Hospital Hong Kong on January 5 and was admitted on the same day. She has been in stable condition and was discharged on January 6.

Her stool specimen grew STEC upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries of the CHP revealed that the patient had travelled to the Mainland during the incubation period. Her travel collaterals have remained asymptomatic so far. Information from the patient's family members revealed that she did not consume any high-risk food (such as raw meat and unpasteurised dairy products) during the incubation period. Investigations of the CHP 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.

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