

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (April 3) 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 32-year-old female with good past health, who presented with fever, abdominal pain, diarrhoea and vomit on March 15. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department (AED) of North Lantau Hospital (NLTH) on the same day. She has been in stable condition and did not require hospitalisation.

Her stool specimen grew STEC upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries of the CHP revealed that the patient had travelled to Taiwan during the incubation period. Her travel collateral also developed similar symptoms on March 15 and both of them attended the AED of NLTH together. The travel collateral did not require hospitalisation. Based on the epidemiological investigation and the latest test results, the CHP identified the symptomatic travel collateral as a probable case and is now arranging tests for him. Investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection and high-risk exposure.

"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.