

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 15) 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 47-year-old male with good past health, who presented with abdominal pain and diarrhoea on September 23. He attended Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital (HKSH) on September 26, September 27 and October 3. His condition was stable and did not require hospitalisation.

His 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. His travel collateral has remained asymptomatic so far. Information from the patient revealed that he did not consume any high-risk food (such as raw meat and unpasteurised dairy products) during the incubation period. As the patient worked at the HKSH Canteen (address: 4/F, Li Shu Pui Block, HKSH, Happy Valley) and was responsible for handling siu mei, the CHP is contacting other relevant staff members of the restaurant to follow up their health conditions.

Symptoms of STEC infection include abdominal cramps and diarrhoea that may in some cases progress to bloody diarrhoea. Fever and vomiting may also occur. The CHP appeals to persons who have patronised the above restaurant from September 23 onwards and have experienced relevant symptoms to seek medical attention immediately.

The 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.