

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 24) 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 30-year-old man with good past health, who has developed diarrhoea and abdominal pain since April 26. He attended the out-patient clinic of a private hospital for management on May 5 and no hospitalisation was required. The patient has been in a stable condition all along.

His stool specimen grew STEC upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries of the CHP revealed that the patient had travelled to Nepal and Thailand from April 15 to 30. He did not consume unpasteurised milk or raw food, or have contact with animals or visit farms during the incubation period. His travel collaterals remained asymptomatic. 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 infections are similar to those recommended for other food-borne diseases. The public are advised to observe good personal and food hygiene:

- Wash hands properly with liquid soap and water before eating or handling food, and after going to the toilet or changing diapers;
- Cook food and boil water thoroughly before consumption. Most food-borne viruses and bacteria (including STEC) can be killed when food is cooked or reheated long enough at sufficient high temperature. 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 a doctor immediately if symptoms of STEC infection, particularly bloody diarrhoea, develop.

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