

CHP investigates confirmed case of botulism

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (July 28) investigating a confirmed case of botulism, and appealed to members of the public to seek medical advice immediately if they develop symptoms of botulism.

The case involved a 59-year-old male patient who works in Hong Kong but lives in Shenzhen. He presented with symptoms including limbs weakness, blurring of vision and slurring of speech since July 13, and was admitted to North District Hospital on the same day and stays in the Intensive Care Unit. The clinical diagnosis was botulism. He is in critical condition. His stool specimen tested positive for DNA of botulinum neurotoxin gene. Epidemiological investigation of the case is ongoing.

"Botulism is a rare but serious illness caused by a neurotoxin produced by *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria. The bacteria produces spores that are heat-resistant and exist widely in the environment. In the absence of oxygen, the spores germinate, grow and excrete botulinum toxins. The toxins can block nerve functions, so patients may experience drooping of the eyelids, double vision or blurred vision, problems with chewing, hoarseness of voice or even difficulties in swallowing, speaking or breathing, and even lead to paralysis," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The spokesman appealed to the public to seek medical advice immediately if they develop symptoms of botulism. They can also visit CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/44865.html) for related information.