

# CHP investigates food poisoning cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 8) investigating a food poisoning cluster affecting 10 persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene when travelling outside Hong Kong to prevent foodborne diseases.

The CHP was notified by the Cathay Pacific Airways Limited (CX) that some passengers of a flight arriving in Hong Kong from Kathmandu, Nepal, this morning reported food poisoning symptoms, including vomiting, nausea, abdominal pain and fever, about 10 to 30 minutes after having meals served in flight. Upon arrival of the flight, staff members of the Port Health Division of the CHP immediately boarded the plane to conduct epidemiological investigations of the affected passengers.

The cluster involved six males and four females aged between 21 and 38. Four of them sought medical advice upon landing. None required hospitalisation.

Preliminary investigations by the CHP revealed that the food served on the flight included: bread, fruits, salad, lamb rice, chicken rice and ice-cream. On the other hand, nine of the affected persons had joined an exchange trip to Nepal between December 28, 2024 and January 7, 2025. In addition to eating on board the flight to Hong Kong, these nine people had eaten the same takeaway chicken, cucumber and tomato sandwiches with salad dressing and French fries about two hours before boarding the flight (i.e. four to five hours before the onset of symptoms). Based on the epidemiological information currently available, it is likely that the sandwiches were the source of the outbreak.

The CHP is still investigating the incident, and an increase in the number of people affected cannot be ruled out. As a precautionary measure, the CHP has collected the food samples served in flight for testing.

The CHP appealed to those who were onboard the flight operated by CX (flight number: CX640) from Kathmandu, Nepal, to Hong Kong on January 7 local time to call the CHP hotline (2125 2372) for follow up and medical surveillance. The hotline will operate from tomorrow (January 9) until January 10 from 9am to 5pm. They should seek medical advice immediately if they develop symptoms of infection, such as fever or feeling unwell.

To prevent foodborne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out, one should:

- Avoid eating raw seafood;

- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters at a buffet;
- Choose pasteurised eggs, egg products or dried egg powder for dishes that often use lightly cooked or uncooked eggs;
- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Store and reheat pre-cooked or leftover foods properly before consumption;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hotpot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked foods;
- Avoid patronising illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Refrain from trying to use salt, vinegar, wine or wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.