

CHP investigates food poisoning cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 16) investigating a food poisoning cluster affecting 22 persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The clusters involved five males and 17 females aged between 28 and 65, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and fever about 11 to 51 hours after having dinner at Kyukyoku Do at the Circle Tower in Tang Lung Street, Causeway Bay, on January 12.

Of those affected, 15 persons sought medical advice. None of them required hospitalisation. The stool specimen of two of them were positive for Norovirus upon laboratory testing.

A preliminary investigation by the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed a variety of food items, epidemiological findings suggest raw oysters and crab salad are more likely to be involved. Staff of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) have conducted an investigation at the restaurant according to the established mechanism, the FEHD immediately instructed the premises concerned to immediately stop serving all incriminated food items, clean and disinfect the premises, and provide food safety and environmental hygiene education to the restaurant staff.

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 precooked 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;
- Susceptible populations, including those with weakened immunity, the

elderly, pregnant women and young children are at a higher risk of foodborne diseases, so they should not consume raw or undercooked foods;

- 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.