

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 17) investigating an imported 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 2-year-old boy with good past health, who presented with vomiting on August 3 and fever, abdominal pain and diarrhoea on the next day. He attended Gleneagles Hong Kong Hospital on August 5 and was admitted on the same day. He was discharged on August 6 after his condition became stable.

His stool specimen grew STEC upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that the patient had travelled to Malaysia from July 29 to August 3, during which he had consumed yogurt and fresh fruit juice, and had contact with animals. He also swam at beach and swimming pool there. According to the information provided by the family of the patient, he did not consume raw food. Moreover, two of his family members travelling together also developed similar symptoms (including fever and diarrhoea) and had recovered. Other travel collaterals and his other household contacts 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 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.

â€œâ€œThe public may visit the CHP's [STEC page](#) for more information.