

CHP investigates imported cholera case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 29) investigating an imported case of cholera, and again appealed to the public for good personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel.

The case involves a 29-month-old girl with good past health, who travelled overseas with her family from May 7 to 16 and developed diarrhoea and vomiting since May 17. She was brought to the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Elizabeth Hospital for medical attention on May 20 and was admitted for isolation and management the same day. She has been in a stable condition all along.

Her stool specimen today yielded toxigenic *Vibrio cholerae* O1 serotype Ogawa upon testing by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that one of her home contacts was symptomatic, arrangements will be made for him to be admitted to a hospital for examination. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

"Most cholera patients have gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhoea or vomiting. Some patients with severe symptoms present with a sudden onset of profuse diarrhoea with rice-water-like and fishy smelling stools, nausea and vomiting. Without prompt treatment, these patients may die from severe dehydration," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Cholera is usually contracted through consumption of food or water contaminated with *Vibrio cholerae*. Human-to-human transmission rarely happens.

The CHP advised the public to observe good personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel:

- Wash hands properly with liquid soap and water before eating or handling food, after going to the toilet or changing diapers, and after handling garbage;
- Avoid handling food when having symptoms of vomiting or diarrhoea;
- Purchase food from hygienic and reliable sources. Do not patronise illegal hawkers;
- Handle raw, cooked and ready-to-eat food with separate utensils and store them separately;
- Ensure thorough cooking of food before consumption;
- Discard any spoiled food;
- Clean the refrigerator regularly. Maintain the fridge at or below 4 degrees Celsius and the freezer at or below -18 degrees C;
- Maintain proper sanitary facilities and drainage systems; and
- Clean and disinfect toilets used by an infected person and the soiled areas.

In addition, travellers to cholera-affected areas should:

- Cook food and boil water thoroughly before consumption. Do not patronise illegal hawkers. Avoid eating cold dishes like salads. Wash and peel fruit by yourself. Do not use ice for beverages. If water cannot be boiled, treat water with chlorine or iodine before consumption; and
- Travellers returning from affected areas should consult a doctor promptly if symptoms develop. Reveal the travel history and maintain good personal, food and environmental hygiene.

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