

# CHP investigates outbreak of acute gastroenteritis at PYNEH

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (May 23) investigating an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) involving staff members, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The Hospital Authority issued a [press release](#) last night (May 22) about staff members of PYNEH experiencing symptoms of gastroenteritis after consuming food purchased from the two hospital canteens. Subsequent to the notification from PYNEH last night, the CHP immediately conducted investigation. As at 3pm today, 43 staff members are identified in the outbreak, (comprising 24 males and 19 females aged 20 to 62) who developed abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea from May 17 to 22. Twenty-eight of the affected persons sought medical attention and none required hospitalisation. All patients are in stable condition. Testing of clinical specimens is in progress.

The CHP's epidemiological investigation revealed that no patients or members of the public are involved in the outbreak so far, and over half of the affected staff members worked in East Block of PYNEH. Meanwhile, it was also revealed that some of the affected staff members did not consume food from the two hospital canteens. In addition, according to a joint site visit and investigation conducted by the CHP and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today, no major irregularities were identified at the two hospital canteens concerned so far. The CFS has provided health education related to food safety and environmental hygiene to the management and staff of the premises. The food premises concerned have already conducted cleaning. Investigations are ongoing.

Based on the currently available evidence, the CHP considers that the outbreak has a higher chance of environmental contamination or person-to-person transmission involving norovirus infection.

The CHP has instructed PYNEH to carry out immediate disinfection to affected areas, especially places visited by the affected persons. Health advice on proper disposal of vomitus, and personal and environmental hygiene were also given.

A spokesman for the CHP reminded that alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses frequently causing AGE, e.g. norovirus. Members of the public are advised to take heed of the following preventive measures against gastroenteritis:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's website ([www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk)) or call the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111) for more information.