

# CHP investigates suspected carbon monoxide poisoning cluster associated with food premises

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (September 7) investigating a suspected cluster of carbon monoxide poisoning at a food premises and appealed to members of the public to take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning.

The cluster involved a 14-person group, comprising six males and eight females, aged between 23 and 39, who consumed a hot pot dinner using charcoal as cooking fuel in the same room at a restaurant located on Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, last night (September 6). They developed symptoms including loss of consciousness, dizziness, vomiting, nausea, headache, shortness of breath and palpitation around two hours after the dinner started. The patients were sent to Ruttonjee Hospital and Queen Mary Hospital for treatment while one of them sought medical treatment at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Four of them were later transferred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Ten out of the 14 patients are now in stable condition while the remaining four have been discharged.

Preliminary investigation revealed that while the air conditioner was turned on, the windows of the dining room were closed and the door was also closed for a long period of time during the hot pot meal, which may have caused the increase in the carbon monoxide level inside the room.

Investigation is ongoing and the CHP has alerted the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to the incident.

The CHP said that carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel that contains carbon, such as wood, natural gas and gasoline.

Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, headache, tiredness and nausea, whereas exposure to a high concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to impaired vision, disturbed co-ordination, unconsciousness, brain damage or even death.

The CHP reminded members of the public to use vented fuel-burning appliances in a well-ventilated area. They should seek medical attention immediately if suspected symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning develop, and should call the emergency hotline 999 immediately if the victim's condition is serious or if the victim is unrousable or not breathing.