

CHP investigates suspected food poisoning case related to calcium oxalate raphide

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 18) investigating a case of suspected food poisoning and reminded the public not to pick or consume wild plants, and to beware of vegetables containing calcium oxalate raphide to avoid food poisoning due to accidental consumption of giant alocasia.

The female patient, aged 69, developed oral numbness, a burning sensation of the mouth and shortness of breath shortly after consuming a wild taro brought from the Mainland as a gift from a friend in Tai Po yesterday (August 17). She visited a private doctor on the same day. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of North District Hospital today and was admitted for further treatment on the same day. She is now in stable condition. The clinical diagnosis was suspected calcium oxalate raphide poisoning.

The CHP's investigation is ongoing.

Taro is a popular ingredient used to prepare various dishes and desserts. However, some plants look like taro (e.g. giant alocasia) but contain toxins which can cause food poisoning. Consuming plants containing calcium oxalate raphide (a needle-shaped crystal of the chemical) can injure the skin and mucous membranes and cause irritation, such as numbness and burning sensation of the tongue, mouth and lips, and swelling of the tongue and lips. Consumption of vegetables accidentally mixed with calcium oxalate raphide-containing plants may also cause food poisoning.

Members of the public should take heed of the following when consuming vegetables:

- Do not pick or consume wild plants;
- Purchase vegetables from reliable suppliers; and
- Remove any plants mixed with edible vegetables and wash them thoroughly before cooking and consumption.

The public may visit the pages on [Food Poisoning Related to the Giant Alocasia](#) and [Calcium Oxalate Food Poisoning](#) of the Centre for Food Safety of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for more information and health advice.