

CHP investigates suspected food poisoning cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 16) investigating two suspected food poisoning clusters affecting six persons and a suspected food poisoning case related to the consumption of wild mushrooms.

The first cluster involved two men, aged 20 and 54, who developed abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever about 13 hours after having dinner buffet at a restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui on May 14.

The second cluster involved one man and three women, aged 26 to 34, who developed similar symptoms about 14 to 24 hours after having a dinner buffet at the same restaurant on the same day.

All of the affected persons have sought medical advice and two required hospitalisation. All patients are in a stable condition.

"We have alerted the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to the incident and investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The suspected food poisoning case related to the consumption of wild mushrooms involves a 44-year-old female who developed abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea about one hour after consuming wild mushrooms at home yesterday (May 15). She sought medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Department of Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital yesterday and was admitted for treatment. She is in a stable condition.

Initial investigations revealed that the patient picked the wild mushrooms that she consumed from the countryside around Sheung Yue (Beas) River in Sheung Shui yesterday. The CHP's investigation is ongoing.

"Members of the public should not pick wild mushrooms for consumption as it is difficult to distinguish edible mushroom species from inedible ones," the spokesman said.

"Mushroom poisoning is generally acute. Common presentations include gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain appearing shortly after ingestion. Depending on the mushroom species, patients may also have other symptoms like profuse sweating, hallucinations, coma or other neurological symptoms, as well as liver failure. Death may result in severe cases," he added.

"If mushroom poisoning is suspected, the patient should seek immediate medical attention and bring along any available remnant for identification," the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, to prevent food-borne diseases, members of the public are

reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times.
When dining out:

- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters, at a buffet;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hot pot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and eating utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.