

CHP investigates suspected food poisoning cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 13) investigating a suspected food poisoning cluster affecting 10 persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The cluster involved four males and six females, aged from 25 to 44, who developed symptoms such as abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and fever about 33 to 50 hours after having dinner at a restaurant in Sheung Wan on December 9.

Five of the affected persons sought medical advice and none required hospitalisation. All affected persons are in stable condition.

Initial investigations of the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed common food and the food concerned was oyster. The poisoning might have been caused by norovirus and the CHP is arranging the collection of stool specimen of patients for testing in order to ascertain the source of infection.

The personnel from the Centre for Food Safety of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have conducted an inspection at the restaurant. Initial investigations revealed that the reasons causing food poisoning include contaminated raw food. The CHP's investigation is ongoing.

To prevent foodborne 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;
- Pre-cooked or leftover foods should be stored and reheated properly before consumption;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hotpot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked foods;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine or wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.