

CHP investigates suspected food poisoning cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (September 26) investigating a suspected food poisoning cluster affecting 51 persons. The CHP reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The cluster involved 48 students of a school in Tai Po, comprising 34 males and 14 females, aged 5 to 15, and three staff members of the school, aged 31 to 55. They developed diarrhoea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, about 4 to 31 hours after having lunch at the school canteen on September 24. Six 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 consumed common food, with a higher chance of involving food poisoning. The affected persons' symptoms is likely related to consumption of the beef lasagna prepared by the canteen. The personnel from the CHP and the Centre for Food Safety of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department visited the place for an environmental investigation, and provided preventive advice against food poisoning to the school. Investigations are 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.