

# CHP investigates suspected food poisoning cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 7) investigating a suspected food poisoning cluster affecting 55 persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The cluster involved 24 males and 31 females, aged 7 to 49, who developed abdominal pain and diarrhoea about eight to 16 hours after having dinner at a canteen of a campsite in Tai Po on August 6. Thirty-six of the affected persons sought medical advice and all affected persons are in stable condition with no need for hospitalisation. The CHP is currently contacting other affected persons and following up on the incident.

Initial investigations of the CHP revealed that the affected patients consumed common food. The food concerned was Penne Carbonara. The poisoning might have been caused by *Clostridium perfringens* 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 CHP and the Centre for Food Safety of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today conducted an inspection at the canteen. Initial investigations revealed that the reasons causing food poisoning include improper food holding temperatures. 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.