

CHP investigates suspected food poisoning related to calcium oxalate raphide

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 3) investigating a case of suspected food poisoning, and hence reminded the public to beware of vegetables containing calcium oxalate raphide.

The female patient, aged 61, developed numbness and swelling over tongue and lips, vomiting and epigastric pain shortly after consuming a wild taro at home yesterday (August 2). She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of North District Hospital on the same day and was admitted for further management subsequently. She is now in a stable condition. The clinical diagnosis was suspected calcium oxalate raphide poisoning.

Initial investigations revealed that the wild taro the patient had consumed was picked near Siu Hang San Tsuen in Fanling. The CHP's investigation is ongoing.

Taro is a popular ingredient used to prepare various dishes and desserts. However, some plants look like taro but contain toxins which can cause food poisoning. Those 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:

- Not pick and 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.