

CHP investigates suspected poisoning case after consumption of medicinal plant

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (September 19) investigating a suspected case of poisoning related to the consumption of soup containing *Radix Fici Simplicissimae* suspected to be mixed with *Gelsemium elegans*, and appealed to members of the public not to collect, buy or consume medicinal plants of unknown origin.

The case involves a 65-year-old male and a 60-year-old female from the same household. They developed dizziness, nausea, blurred vision and fingertip numbness around 30 to 60 minutes after consuming self-prepared soup containing *Radix Fici Simplicissimae* at home on September 3. They attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Prince of Wales Hospital on the same day and were in stable condition. Both of them have been discharged after treatment.

Urine samples of both patients, as well as the remnants of the herbal soup and the unused *Radix Fici Simplicissimae*, were sent for laboratory testing by the hospital. The urine sample of the female patient and the remnants of the herbal soup were found to contain gelsemine after laboratory testing.

The CHP's initial investigations revealed that the *Radix Fici Simplicissimae* concerned was not bought in Hong Kong. Investigations are ongoing.

"*Radix Fici Simplicissimae* is not toxic, but it resembles some toxic plants, such as *Gelsemium elegans*, and could be mixed up with these substances. Members of the public should purchase medicinal plants from licensed shops with good reputations and should not consume medicinal plants of unknown origin. If they feel unwell after taking medicinal plants, they should seek advice from healthcare professionals immediately," a spokesman for the CHP advised.