

CHP investigates suspected puffer fish poisoning case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 20) investigating a suspected puffer fish poisoning case, and hence reminded members of the public not to consume puffer fish.

The case involves two males aged 44 and 50, who developed perioral and limb weakness and shortness of breath about four hours after consuming cooked puffer fish, which was caught by themselves, on December 19. Initial investigations by the CHP revealed that they had also consumed puffer fish caught by themselves before, and the CHP believed that this incident was caused by consuming poisonous puffer fish handled improperly.

They attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Mary Hospital yesterday (December 19) and was admitted for treatment. One patient is now in critical condition, and the other is in stable condition.

A spokesman for the CHP said that consumption of puffer fish is the main cause of food poisoning from tetrodotoxin, which is a potent water-soluble neurotoxin that can affect the central nervous system.

"Organs such as the liver, gonads and skin of puffer fish have high concentrations of tetrodotoxin. Being heat-stable, the toxin does not decompose upon cooking, boiling, drying or freezing. Tetrodotoxin intoxication can cause problems in respiration and circulation, and is potentially fatal. There is no known antidote or antitoxin that can decompose tetrodotoxin. Members of the public are advised to avoid purchasing and preparing puffer fish or unknown fish for consumption to prevent tetrodotoxin-related food poisoning," the spokesman said.