

CHP investigates suspected puffer fish poisoning case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 1) investigating a suspected puffer fish poisoning case, and hence reminded members of the public not to consume puffer fish.

The case involves a 72-year-old man who developed numbness of hands, limbs weakness and dizziness about five hours after consuming cooked puffer fish, caught in local waters, at home yesterday (November 30).

He attended the accident and emergency department of a private hospital today and was subsequently admitted to the intensive care unit of Yan Chai Hospital for further treatment. He is now in a stable condition.

Investigations by the CHP are continuing.

A spokesman for the CHP said that consumption of puffer fish is the main cause of food poisoning from tetrodotoxin. Tetrodotoxin 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.