

CHP investigates three food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (June 21) investigating three epidemiologically linked food poisoning clusters affecting nine persons involving a restaurant located in The Kimberley Hotel. The CHP reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The first cluster involved three females aged between 54 and 82, who developed abdominal pain, fever, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea and weakness about 28 hours after having a lunch buffet at the Coffee House in the Kimberley Hotel located in Tsim Sha Tsui on June 17.

The second cluster involved four females aged between 7 and 50, who developed similar symptoms about 14 hours after having a dinner buffet at the same restaurant of the hotel on June 18.

The third cluster involved a male and a female, who developed similar symptoms about 12 hours after having a dinner buffet at the same restaurant of the hotel on June 18.

Among the nine affected persons, seven of them sought medical advice. Three of them required hospitalisation. The stool specimen of one affected person was positive for Salmonella upon laboratory testing. All patients are in stable condition.

Initial investigations by the CHP revealed that the clusters involved buffets, and the affected persons had consumed different types of food including cold seafood platters and desserts. The CHP appeals to persons who have patronised the Coffee House in the Kimberley Hotel on June 17 or 18, and have experienced relevant acute gastroenteritis symptoms such as abdominal pain, fever, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, to seek medical attention and contact the CHP immediately. The CHP has set up an enquiry hotline (2125 2372) which operates from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5.30pm.

The personnel from the Centre for Food Safety and the Environmental Hygiene Branch of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) conducted a site investigation at the food premises last night (June 20), and found that its hygienic condition was unsatisfactory. The FEHD therefore summonsed the operator of the food premises concerned. After site investigations, the FEHD considered a thorough cleaning and disinfection shall be conducted in the food premises. The management is co-operating and will temporarily close the food premises for a thorough cleaning and disinfection from today onwards. Business will resume upon a satisfactory review by the FEHD. Food and environmental samples were taken by the personnel from the FEHD for testing, and an 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 using the toilet.