

# CHP investigates two food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 17) investigating two epidemiologically linked food poisoning clusters affecting eight persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The first cluster involved five females aged between 27 and 40, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting about 19.5 to 37.5 hours after having a buffet dinner at Promenade Restaurant at Harbour Plaza Metropolis located in Hung Hom on December 10.

The second cluster involved three females aged between 26 and 47, who developed abdominal pain and diarrhoea about 10 to 18 hours after having a buffet dinner at the same restaurant on December 11.

Four of the affected persons sought medical advice. None required hospitalisation.

Initial investigations by the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed common food including raw oysters. The incident might have been caused by norovirus or *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*.

Personnel from the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have conducted an inspection at the restaurant, took food samples for laboratory testing, and instructed the premises concerned to suspend serving incriminated food items with immediate effect and carry out cleaning and disinfection of the premises. The officers have also provided health education related to food safety and environmental hygiene to the staff of the premises.

The CHP and CFS's investigation is ongoing, and it cannot be ruled out that the number of cases will increase.

Norovirus infection typically causes acute gastroenteritis. It is also a common cause of food poisoning and is very often related to consumption of undercooked or raw shellfish. These diseases affect people of all age groups and tend to be more common during winter. *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* is commonly found in coastal waters where people are infected by eating raw or undercooked seafood.

To prevent foodborne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out, one should:

- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi,

sushi and raw oysters at a buffet;

- Choose pasteurised eggs, egg products or dried egg powder for dishes that often use lightly cooked or uncooked eggs;
- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Store and reheat pre-cooked or leftover foods 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;
- Avoid patronising illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Refrain from trying to use salt, vinegar, wine or wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.