

CHP investigates two food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 30) investigating two epidemiologically linked food poisoning clusters affecting nine persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The first cluster involved two males and four females, aged between 36 and 46, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, and fever about 10 to 15 hours after having dinner at a restaurant in Mong Kok on August 28.

The other cluster involved one male and two females, aged between 28 and 30, who developed similar symptoms about nine to 31 hours after having dinner at the same restaurant on the same day.

Among the nine affected persons, five of them sought medical advice. Two of them required hospitalisation. The stool specimen of one affected person was positive for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* upon laboratory testing. All patients are in stable condition.

Initial investigations by the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed common food and the food concerned was clam in preserved fish sauce. The incident might have been caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*.

Personnel from the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department conducted an inspection at the restaurant, took food sample for examination, and instructed the premises concerned to suspend the sale of relevant food as well as carry out cleaning and disinfection of the premises. The CFS has also provided health education related to food safety and environmental hygiene to the staff of the premises. The investigations of the CHP and the CFS are 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 going to the toilet.