

CHP investigates two food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 20) investigating two epidemiologically linked food poisoning clusters affecting seven persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The first cluster involved one male and three females aged between 26 and 28, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and fever about 6.5 to 57 hours after they had lunch at Tono Daikiya Japanese Restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui on November 10.

The second cluster involved two males and one female aged between 37 and 43, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea and fever about 38 to 54 hours after they had dinner at the same restaurant on November 14.

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

Initial investigations by the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed common food and the food concerned were durian paste, shrimp sashimi and salmon sashimi.

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 of incriminated food items with immediate effect, carry out cleaning and disinfection of the premises and improve food preparation process and food hygiene. 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 rule out that the number of cases will increase. The CHP appeals to persons who have consumed the said food items from the aforementioned restaurant between November 10 and 14 to seek medical advice as soon as possible if they feel unwell.

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:

- 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;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;

- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters at a buffet;
- 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.