

CHP investigates two suspected food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 21) investigating two suspected food poisoning clusters affecting seven persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent food-borne diseases.

The first cluster involved four females aged 6 to 54. They developed gastroenteritis symptoms including abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever about eight to 12 hours after consuming sandwiches yesterday (May 20). These sandwiches were purchased from a shop in Tsuen Wan on the same day.

The second cluster comprised three females aged 5 to 34, who developed similar symptoms about seven to 14 hours after consuming sandwiches of the same brand yesterday. These sandwiches were bought from the same shop in Tsuen Wan on the same day.

All affected persons had sought medical consultation and none required hospitalisation. They are now in stable condition. Investigations are proceeding.

"We have alerted the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to the incident and investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Prolonged storage of food at room temperature may allow pathogens to grow and produce toxins. Members of the public should avoid consuming cooked or ready-to-eat food that has been kept at room temperature for several hours," the spokesman said.

To prevent food-borne 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;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hot pot 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 food;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.