

CHP investigates two suspected food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 30) investigating two suspected 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 four females, aged between 25 and 38, who developed abdominal pain and diarrhoea about 9 to 12 hours after consuming food provided by a caterer on December 21.

The other cluster involved two males and three females, aged between two and 71, who developed similar symptoms about 9 to 18 hours after consuming the food ordered from the same caterer on December 25.

All of the affected persons have not sought medical advice. All affected persons are in stable condition.

Initial investigations of the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed common food and the food concerned were diced beef and beef ribs in red wine sauce. The incident might have been caused by *Clostridium perfringens*.

The personnel from the Centre for Food Safety of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have conducted an inspection at the caterer's premises. The CHP's 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 going to the toilet.