

# CHP investigates two suspected food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 24) investigating two suspected food poisoning clusters affecting 27 persons, and appealed to members of the public to patronise reliable and hygienic restaurants or food suppliers, and maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The first cluster involved 19 students and four staff from a sheltered workshop in Chai Wan, including nine males and 14 females aged between 21 and 76. Three of the affected persons sought medical advice and none required hospitalisation.

The other cluster involved four students from a sheltered workshop in Sha Tin, including one male and three females aged between 37 and 66. One of the affected persons sought medical advice and none required hospitalisation.

All affected persons had lunch provided by a food supplier, Chez Lung Catering Co. Limited, on January 22. They developed diarrhoea and vomiting about seven to 28 hours after consuming the food. Initial investigations of the CHP revealed that the food poisoning might have been caused by infection of *Clostridium perfringens*. The CHP has arranged the collection of stool specimen of patients for testing in order to ascertain the source of infection. The CHP suspected that the food concerned was pork chop with onion sauce.

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has conducted inspections at the food supplier's premises yesterday (January 23) and today. Preliminary investigation by the CFS suspected that the incriminated food item was inadequately cooked, with prolonged storage under improper temperature. Investigation is ongoing.

Officers of the CHP have conducted site visits at two sheltered workshops and provided health advice to the staff of the workshops concerning proper disinfection, and personal and environmental hygiene. The workshops have been put under medical surveillance.

The CHP is aware that Chez Lung Catering Co. Limited also supplies food to other sheltered workshops and schools. The CHP has contacted the relevant institutions and no other individual has been found to be affected after investigation. Investigation of the CHP is ongoing.

The CHP said that food poisoning caused by *Clostridium perfringens* is usually associated with meat and meat products that are cross-contaminated, inadequately cooked or stored under sub-optimal temperature for prolonged period. The incubation period ranges from 6 to 24 hours (usually 10 to 12 hours). Severe abdominal pain and acute diarrhoea are common symptoms.

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.