

CHP reports latest investigation of outbreak of acute gastroenteritis at PYNEH

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (May 28) reported the latest progress of its investigation into an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) and again reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The Hospital Authority issued a [press release](#) on May 22 night about staff members of PYNEH experiencing symptoms of gastroenteritis after consuming food purchased from the two hospital canteens. The CHP immediately conducted investigation and announced on May 23 the [initial investigation results](#) that the outbreak has a higher chance of environmental contamination or person-to-person transmission involving norovirus infection. The CHP has been continuing its epidemiological investigation. As at 3pm today, the CHP identified 77 staff members in total, comprising 36 males and 41 females aged 20 to 65, who developed abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever from May 17 to 23. Forty-seven of the affected persons sought medical attention, one of them who required hospitalisation has already been discharged after treatment. All patients are in stable condition.

The CHP arranged stool testing for 27 cases, 23 stool samples tested positive for norovirus. The CHP's investigation revealed that over half of the affected staff members worked in East Block of PYNEH and multiple staff members reported witness of prior vomiting incident or contact with persons with AGE within the hospital concerned. According to the investigation findings, the CHP concluded that it was an outbreak of AGE caused by norovirus, person-to-person transmission or transmission through environmental contamination cannot be excluded.

Upon CHP's instruction, PYNEH carried out immediate disinfection to affected areas, especially places visited by the affected persons. Eight environment swabs taken by the CHP from common areas in East block of PYNEH on May 23 tested negative for norovirus. No new cases have been developed after the disinfections conducted on May 23.

A spokesman for the CHP reminded that norovirus is highly contagious, susceptible persons can be infected even exposed to with just a few pieces of norovirus. Potential outbreak is known when vomiting incident took place in confined area with suboptimal ventilation. Proper and timely handling of vomiting incident with adequate environmental disinfection is important, especially in hospitals, institutions and schools. Alcohol-based handrub should not substitute hand hygiene with liquid soap and water, as alcohol does not effectively kill some viruses frequently causing AGE, e.g. norovirus. Members of the public are advised to take heed of the following preventive measures against gastroenteritis:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk) or call the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111) for more information.