

CHP updates on latest situation of invasive Group B Streptococcus infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 20) continued its investigation into the latest situation of invasive Group B Streptococcus infection. The CHP appealed to members of the public for heightened vigilance and in particular, to pay attention when touching or handling raw freshwater fish. One should wear gloves, as well as not consume undercooked freshwater fish.

The CHP has been closely monitoring the invasive Group B Streptococcus infection cases over the past few weeks and conducted genetic sequencing analysis for patients' specimens to confirm infection number of serotype III sequence type 283 (ST283). The recent surveillance data of hospitals show that the daily number of hospitalised patients confirmed to have invasive Group B Streptococcus infection has stabilised. For ST283 cases, since the announcements on [September 13](#) and [September 16](#), the CHP today confirmed 30 additional ST283 cases involving patients previously admitted to the hospitals. The patients involved 16 males and 14 females, aged between 36 and 95. The patients mainly presented with sepsis (19 patients) and joint abscess (11 patients). Together with the 40 cases of ST283 infection announced earlier, this cluster involved a cumulative total of 70 patients residing in 18 districts throughout the territory. The onset date of the disease for all 70 patients was before September 10, and 54 of them have underlying illnesses. Among the 70 patients, 19 have been discharged, 45 hospitalised patients are in stable condition, three are in serious condition and the other three with underlying illnesses have passed away.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations revealed that 58 patients have had contact with or handled raw freshwater fish before the onset of symptoms (six of them reported that they had wounds on their hands when handling raw freshwater fish). Eight patients cannot rule out that they have consumed undercooked freshwater fish (not freshwater fish sashimi), and the exposure history of the remaining four patients is under investigation.

While none of the 70 patients were fishmongers or engaged in fish culture-related jobs, two of them are cooks who have handled raw freshwater fish. As the patients resided in various districts throughout the territory, and the freshwater fishes concerned were bought from 36 markets in 16 districts respectively, the CHP considered that the affected freshwater fish may involve the wholesale level. The laboratory analysis of the environmental samples collected by the CHP earlier from the Freshwater Fish Market under the Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Food Market is still in progress. So far, no abnormality has been observed by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department regarding the freshwater fish in the wholesale fish markets.

Moreover, the CHP has conducted medical surveillance on over 1 500 workers and no symptomatic worker has been identified. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has strengthened the cleaning and disinfection of the relevant markets.

"Members of the public should wear gloves when touching or handling raw freshwater fish. If symptoms such as an inflamed wound and fever develop, they should seek medical attention promptly. Meanwhile, the public should refrain from consuming undercooked freshwater fish," a spokesman for the CHP reminded.

To prevent Group B Streptococcus (ST283) infection, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene, and should keep their hands clean and practice good wound care at all times, especially:

- To minimise the infection risks, workers of aquatic products or restaurants must wear gloves when handling aquatic products and avoid direct contact with aquatic products or dirty water with bare hands;
- When buying aquatic products, the public must avoid direct contact with the aquatic products or use any towel provided by the stalls. They should wash hands with liquid soap and water as soon as possible if having contact with aquatic products which are not fully cooked. When handling aquatic products at home, the public should also wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Members of the public must not eat any freshwater fish sashimi, raw or undercooked freshwater aquatic products. When consuming hot pot food or congee items which consist of aquatic products, they should ensure that the food is thoroughly cooked in which the centre of the food should reach a temperature of at least 75 degrees Celsius so as to destroy pathogen; and
- People must not touch aquatic products directly whenever there is a wound on hands. If a wound is sustained during handling aquatic products, the wound must be cleaned immediately and properly covered with waterproof adhesive dressings. Individuals should seek medical advice promptly when a wound infection is found.

The public may visit the CHP's [Invasive Group B Streptococcus Infection associated with Sequence Type 283 \(ST283\)](#) page for more information.