

CHP updates on latest situation of invasive Group B Streptococcus infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 27) continued its investigation into the latest situation of invasive Group B Streptococcus infection. While the number of confirmed cases has started to decrease since late September, the CHP continued to appeal 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 started to decrease since late September. For ST283 cases, since the announcements on [September 13](#), [September 16](#) and [September 20](#), the CHP today confirmed nine additional ST283 cases involving patients previously admitted to the hospitals. The patients involved seven males and two females, aged between 49 and 92. The patients mainly presented with sepsis and joint abscess. Together with the 70 cases of ST283 infection announced earlier, this cluster involved a cumulative total of 79 patients residing in 18 districts throughout the territory. The onset date of the disease for all 79 patients was before September 10, 62 of them have underlying illnesses, 33 have been discharged, 39 hospitalised patients are in stable condition, four are in serious condition and the other three with underlying illnesses have passed away.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations revealed that 66 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). Ten patients cannot rule out that they have consumed undercooked freshwater fish (not freshwater fish sashimi), and the exposure history of the remaining three patients is under investigation.

While none of the 79 patients were fishmongers or engaged in fish culture-related jobs, two of them are cooks who have handled raw freshwater fish. The patients resided in various districts throughout the territory, and the freshwater fishes concerned were bought from 40 markets in 17 districts respectively. Apart from five freshwater fish and environmental samples collected from a retail fish stall in Shek Wu Hui Market which were tested positive for ST283 announced earlier, all 27 environmental samples collected from the Freshwater Fish Market under Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Food Market were tested negative for ST283. So far, no relevant workers was found symptomatic by the CHP and other investigations on other environments and freshwater fish are still in progress.

"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.