

Results of targeted surveillance on Vibrio parahaemolyticus in ready-to-eat food all satisfactory

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 6) announced the results of a recently completed targeted food surveillance project on *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in ready-to-eat food, which showed that all samples passed the test.

A total of 300 samples of ready-to-eat food, including cooked seafood such as fish, crustaceans and shellfish and raw foods such as raw oysters, sashimi and sushi, were collected from different retailers, including online retailers and food factories, for testing for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* this year.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "*Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, a common bacterium that can cause food poisoning, is naturally present in seawater and often found in seafood. Food poisoning caused by this pathogenic bacterium is usually associated with consumption of undercooked or raw seafood, in particular shellfish, or improperly handled food that is contaminated with bacteria."

Common symptoms of food poisoning caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, including diarrhoea, vomiting, mild fever and abdominal pain, usually occur within one or two days after consumption of contaminated food. Recovery is usually within a few days. Nonetheless, children, the elderly, pregnant women and those with a weaker immune system are more likely to develop severe symptoms.

The spokesman said, "Despite the fact that the test results of the samples were all satisfactory, the trade and the public should not take the risk lightly. To prevent food poisoning caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, the food trade should be reminded that raw oysters, sashimi and sushi sold on the premises should be separated from other food and kept in a refrigerator at a temperature between 0 and 4 degrees Celsius. To avoid cross contamination, raw food should be prepared only at specified areas in a food preparation room. Exclusive cutting boards and knives should be used and the utensils should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly before handling different types of raw food. Cooking aquatic products thoroughly is the only way to prevent diseases caused by harmful microorganisms and parasites. Overproduction should also be avoided as the quality of food may be affected when the production capacity is overlooked."

The spokesman reminded consumers to patronise hygienic and reliable licensed food premises and consume ready-to-eat food as soon as possible after purchase. The elderly, children, pregnant women and those with a weaker immune system should avoid consuming high-risk food, including inadequately cooked food.