

Suspected case of raw bamboo shoot poisoning under CHP investigation

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 10) investigating a suspected case of raw bamboo shoot poisoning affecting two persons, and hence reminded members of the public not to consume raw bamboo shoot.

The case involves a 67-year-old man and his 50-year-old female domestic helper. The male patient purchased fresh bamboo shoots from a shop in Mei Foo on August 8 and the female patient pressed the raw bamboo shoots into juice at home on the same day. The duo developed headache, dizziness, palpitation, nausea, limb numbness and shortness of breath about 10 minutes after consuming the juice on that day. Symptoms of the female patient subsided after an hour and she did not seek medical attention, whereas the symptoms of the male patient persisted and he attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Elizabeth Hospital on the same day. He did not require hospitalisation. Both of them are in stable condition.

The CHP's investigation is ongoing.

"Raw bamboo shoot contain cyanogenic glycosides. Cyanogenic plant products such as bamboo shoot can cause poisoning when eaten raw and in sufficient amounts. Cyanogenic plants should be cut into smaller pieces, soaked in water and cooked thoroughly in boiling water before for safe consumption," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The spokesman appealed to the public not to consume raw bamboo shoot. Particular attention should be given to children, the elderly and individuals with poor health conditions. If symptoms of poisoning develop, they should immediately consult medical professionals for advice and prompt treatment.

"Natural toxins are present in a wide variety of plants, some of which are commonly consumed as food, including bamboo shoot. In humans, the clinical signs of acute cyanide intoxication include rapid respiration, drop in blood pressure, rapid pulse, dizziness, headache, stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, mental confusion, twitching and convulsions. Death due to cyanide poisoning can occur when the cyanide level exceeds the limit an individual is able to detoxify," the spokesman explained.