

Suspected puffer fish poisoning case under CHP investigation

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (March 1) investigating a suspected puffer fish poisoning case, and hence reminded members of the public not to consume puffer fish.

The case involved a 69-year-old woman, who developed perioral numbness, generalised weakness, vomiting and respiratory failure about 30 minutes after consuming cooked puffer fish caught by her husband in local waters, for dinner at home yesterday (February 28).

She attended the accident and emergency department of Tin Shui Wai Hospital on the same day and was subsequently transferred and admitted to the intensive care unit of Tuen Mun Hospital for further management. She is now in a serious condition.

Investigations by the CHP are continuing.

A spokesman for the CHP said that consumption of puffer fish is the main cause of food poisoning from tetrodotoxin. Tetrodotoxin is a potent water-soluble neurotoxin that can affect the central nervous system.

"Organs such as the liver, gonads and skin of puffer fish have high concentrations of tetrodotoxin. Being heat-stable, the toxin does not decompose upon cooking, boiling, drying or freezing. Tetrodotoxin intoxication can cause problems in respiration or circulation and is potentially fatal. There is no known antidote or antitoxin. Members of the public are advised to avoid purchasing and preparing puffer fish or unknown fish for consumption to prevent tetrodotoxin-related food poisoning," the spokesman said.