

Turnip pudding sample found to contain excessive Bacillus cereus

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (April 24) announced that a turnip pudding sample was detected to contain an excessive amount of *Bacillus cereus*, a pathogen. The CFS is following up on the case.

A CFS spokesman said, "Following up on a food complaint, the CFS collected the abovementioned sample from a retail shop in Wong Tai Sin for testing. The test result showed that the sample contained *Bacillus cereus* at a level of 140 000 per gram. Under the Microbiological Guidelines for Food, if ready-to-eat food contains *Bacillus cereus* at a level of more than 100 000 per gram, it is considered unsatisfactory."

The spokesman said that the CFS had informed the vendor concerned of the unsatisfactory test result, instructed the vendor to stop selling the affected product immediately and conducted an investigation at the production plant. The CFS has also provided health education on food safety and hygiene to the person-in-charge and staff of the vendor and production plant, and requested them to review and improve the food production and storage process and carry out thorough cleaning and disinfection. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence.

According to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food available for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

Bacillus cereus is commonly found in the environment. Unhygienic conditions in food processing and storage may give rise to its growth. Consuming food contaminated with excessive *Bacillus cereus* or its heat-stable toxins may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting and diarrhoea.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action in order to safeguard public health and food safety.