

CHP investigates case of suspected neurotoxic shellfish poisoning

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 6) investigating a case of suspected neurotoxic shellfish poisoning affecting a 31-year-old man.

The patient presented with vomiting, dizziness, blurred vision, generalised weakness and four limbs rigidity about 45 minutes after consuming sea snails and areolate babylon at home yesterday (May 5). He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of United Christian Hospital on the same day and did not require hospitalisation. He has been in stable condition all along.

An initial investigation revealed that the sea snails and areolate babylon were bought from a seafood stall at Po Tat Market in Kwun Tong. An investigation by the CHP is continuing.

"Neurotoxic shellfish poisoning toxin is a natural toxin sometimes found in bivalve shellfish. It is heat-stable and cannot be destroyed through cooking," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"The neurotoxic shellfish poisoning symptoms include tingling of the lips, mouth and tongue, as well as gastrointestinal upset such as diarrhoea and vomiting. The onset is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after ingestion of the shellfish," the spokesman added.

The spokesman reminded members of the public that they should seek medical advice immediately if they develop neurotoxic shellfish poisoning symptoms, and save any leftovers for investigation and laboratory testing.

To reduce the risk of shellfish poisoning, the public should:

- Buy shellfish from reliable and licensed seafood shops;
- Remove the viscera, gonads and roe before cooking and discard any cooking liquid before consumption;
- Eat a smaller amount of shellfish in any one meal; and
- When symptoms occur after consuming shellfish, seek medical advice immediately.