

# CHP investigates cluster of food poisoning involving porcini mushrooms

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (February 7) investigating a food poisoning case involving four persons who had eaten porcini mushrooms.

Two male and two female patients (aged between 30 and 74) presented with abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever around two to three hours after consuming porcini mushrooms cooked in a residential premise on January 30. They sought medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Elizabeth Hospital and United Christian Hospital, and were admitted on the same day. All of them were discharged after treatment.

Based on their clinical symptoms, the CHP believed that the patients developed food poisoning due to consuming porcini mushrooms. Upon testing, samples of uncooked porcini mushroom from the same batch provided by a patient was confirmed to be a poisonous mushroom species containing certain gastrointestinal irritants that remain even after being cooked.

The investigation revealed that the porcini mushroom concerned was purchased by one of the affected persons from a shop in Lo Wu, Shenzhen, last December. The product concerned was not pre-packaged and did not have any trademark or information on its place of origin.

The CHP has notified the case to the relevant authority of the Mainland, and will continue to follow up on the case and take appropriate action to safeguard public health.

Mushroom poisoning is generally acute. Common presentations include gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain appearing shortly after ingestion. Depending on the mushroom species, patients may also have other symptoms such as profuse sweating, hallucinations, comas or other neurological symptoms, as well as liver failure. Death may result in severe cases. If mushroom poisoning is suspected, the patient should seek immediate medical attention and bring along any available remnant for identification.

Members of the public are recommended to take note of the following when choosing or consuming mushrooms locally or overseas:

- Buy mushrooms from reputable and reliable suppliers, and not buy mushroom products which may be mixed with unknown species;
- Do not buy mushrooms which look unhygienic, such as those with growing substrates left with the product, or those which show signs of spoilage such as coloured spots/abnormal smell/slime, etc;
- Do not pick wild mushrooms for consumption as it is difficult to distinguish edible mushroom species from inedible ones; and

- Wash and cook mushrooms thoroughly before consumption.