

CHP investigates food poisoning cluster

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 25) investigating a food poisoning cluster affecting 13 persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The cluster involved four males and nine females aged between 34 and 64, who developed abdominal pain and diarrhoea about 24 to 66 hours after having lunch at Ying Garden Seafood Dining at To Kwa Wan on January 17.

Of those affected, five persons sought medical advice. None of them required hospitalisation.

A preliminary investigation by the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed a variety of food items, including "siu mei" such as roast chicken, barbecued pork and other hot dishes. Staff of the CHP and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have conducted an investigation at the restaurant, taken food samples for testing, and examined the cooking process and hygiene of the food.

Preliminary investigation by the CFS could not rule out the risk of cross-contamination during the preparation process. According to the established mechanism, the CFS immediately instructed the premises concerned to immediately stop serving the roast chicken and barbecued pork involved, clean and disinfect the premises, improve the food preparation process and hygiene, and provide food safety and environmental hygiene education to the restaurant staff.

The investigation of the CHP and CFS is ongoing. It cannot be ruled out that the number of affected persons may increase.

To prevent foodborne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When dining out, one should:

- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters at a buffet;
- Choose pasteurised eggs, egg products or dried egg powder for dishes that often use lightly cooked or uncooked eggs;
- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Store and reheat precooked or leftover foods properly before consumption;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hotpot or barbecue meal;
- Handle raw and cooked foods carefully and separate them completely

during the cooking process;

- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked foods;
- Avoid patronising illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Susceptible populations, including those with weakened immunity, the elderly, pregnant women and young children are at a higher risk of foodborne diseases, so they should not consume raw or undercooked foods;
- Refrain from trying to use salt, vinegar, wine or wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.