

CHP investigates suspected case of mad honey poisoning

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (June 5) investigating a suspected case of mad honey poisoning, and reminded the public to buy honey from a reliable source or apiary.

A 51-year-old female developed dizziness around 30 minutes after consuming honey earlier today. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Pok Oi Hospital and was hospitalised for observation due to hypotension and bradycardia. The patient is now in stable condition. Her clinical diagnosis was suspected mad honey poisoning.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the patient had consumed honey brought by her relative from Nepal. The poisoning might have been caused by grayanotoxin. The CHP's investigation is ongoing.

Mad honey poisoning is caused by ingestion of honey containing grayanotoxins derived from plants belonging to the Ericaceae family, including rhododendrons. Grayanotoxins are neurotoxins which can affect nerves and muscles. Symptoms of poisoning include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, dizziness, weakness, excessive perspiration, hypersalivation and paraesthesia shortly after ingestion. In severe cases, hypotension, bradycardia or shock may occur.

Members of the public are reminded to take heed of the following preventive advice:

- Buy honey from a reliable source or apiary;
- Discard honey with a bitter or astringent taste – grayanotoxin-containing honey may cause a burning sensation in the throat; and
- Pay special attention to honey from India, Nepal and the Black Sea region of Türkiye as there have been grayanotoxin poisoning cases connected with honey from these areas.