

CHP investigates suspected food poisoning cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 3) investigating a suspected outbreak of food poisoning affecting 15 persons and a food poisoning case related to the consumption of mushrooms.

The suspected outbreak of food poisoning affected nine men and six women aged 18 to 22 who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea and nausea about 7 to 17 hours after consuming food provided by a caterer at a university in Pok Fu Lam on April 26 evening. One of them sought medical attention but did not require hospitalisation. All affected persons are in a stable condition.

"We have alerted the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to the incident and investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Separately, the CHP is investigating a food poisoning case involving a 29-year-old female who developed hallucinations, diplopia and lethargy at home on the evening of April 30 about 14 hours after consuming mushrooms purchased from a market in the Mainland. She was admitted to Tseung Kwan O Hospital yesterday (May 2) and was discharged on the same day. She is now in a stable condition.

"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 like profuse sweating, hallucination, coma or other neurological symptoms, as well as liver failure. Death may result in severe cases," the spokesman said.

"We advise the public to buy mushrooms from reputable and reliable suppliers and not to buy mushroom products which may be mixed with unknown species. Members of the public should not pick wild mushrooms for consumption as it is difficult to distinguish edible mushroom species from inedible ones. Mixing of edible species with inedible or poisonous species of mushroom will not dilute toxicity. Cooking in most cases does not destroy toxicity. If mushroom poisoning is suspected, the patient should seek immediate medical attention and bring along any available remnant for identification," the spokesman added.

Meanwhile, to prevent food-borne diseases, members of the public are reminded to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times. When enjoying delivered food and dining out:

- Choose reliable catering supplier;
- Arrange food to be delivered at appropriate timing and consume the food immediately;
- Keep cold dishes at four degrees Celsius or below and hot-served foods

above 60 degrees Celsius;

- Food should not be left at room temperature for more than two hours;
- Patronise only reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be a discerning consumer in choosing cold dishes, including sashimi, sushi and raw oysters, at a buffet;
- Ensure food is thoroughly cooked before eating during a hot pot 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 food;
- Do not patronise illegal food hawkers;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not try to use salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi to kill bacteria as they are not effective; and
- Always wash hands before eating and after going to the toilet.