

# CHP investigates three food poisoning clusters

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (February 17) investigating three epidemiologically linked food poisoning clusters affecting 11 persons, and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent foodborne diseases.

The three clusters involved five males and six females, aged between 28 and 35, who developed abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting about 16 to 61 hours after eating at Oyster Station (Restaurant name on licence: OS Oyster & Steak House) at 7/F, 1 Knutsford Terrace in Tsim Sha Tsui on February 10, 11 and 12.

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

A preliminary investigation by the CHP revealed that the affected persons had consumed common food, including raw oysters, at the above restaurant. The incident might have been caused by norovirus.

Personnel from the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have conducted an inspection at the restaurant and instructed the premises concerned to suspend serving incriminated food items with immediate effect and carry out cleaning and disinfection of the premises. The officers have also provided health education related to food safety and environmental hygiene to the staff of the premises.

The CHP and CFS's investigation is ongoing.

Norovirus infection typically causes acute gastroenteritis. It is also a common cause of food poisoning and is very often related to consumption of undercooked or raw shellfish. These diseases affect people of all age groups and tend to be more common during winter.

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.