

# CHP reminds public to be vigilant in preventing norovirus when travelling outside Hong Kong

Following a number of cases of norovirus infection due to consumption of contaminated food in Japan since last month, the Controller of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health, Dr Edwin Tsui, today (March 8) reminded the public to be more vigilant and pay attention to personal, environmental and food hygiene to minimise the risk of food poisoning when travelling.

"According to the Japanese authorities, more than 150 people have been infected with norovirus since last month after patronising Kiichi, a Japanese restaurant in Osaka Prefecture, or eating Japanese confectionery (including strawberry daifuku) produced by the Kiyotsuki Co. Ltd in Yonago City, Tottori Prefecture. Information from the Japanese health authorities also showed that the activity of infectious gastroenteritis in Japan has increased recently. As Japan is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vicinity of Hong Kong, I would like to appeal to those who are planning to visit or are currently visiting Japan to remain vigilant and maintain personal, environmental and food hygiene at all times to minimise the risk of being infected," Dr Tsui said.

"In general, norovirus is more active in winter. Norovirus is highly contagious and individuals may become infected after being exposed to even a small amount of norovirus. The virus can be transmitted through various means, such as eating contaminated food, contacting with the vomit or excreta of infected persons, and contacting with contaminated objects. It may lead to a large-scale outbreak. Since alcohol is not effective in killing norovirus, alcohol-based handrubs are not a substitute for handwashing with soap and water," he added.

Symptoms of norovirus include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, mild fever and malaise. Most patients usually recover on their own and symptoms usually improve within one to three days.

To prevent foodborne diseases, members of the public are advised to observe good personal, food and environmental hygiene. When eating out, the following points should be observed:

- Avoid eating raw seafood;
- Be careful in choosing cold cuts, including sashimi, sushi and oysters in buffets;
- Use pasteurised eggs, egg products or egg powders when preparing dishes using slightly cooked or uncooked eggs;
- Patronise reliable and licensed restaurants;
- Store and reheat pre-cooked or leftover food properly before

consumption;

- When having hot pots or barbecuing, make sure the food is thoroughly cooked before eating;
- Handle raw and cooked food with care and separate them thoroughly during the cooking process;
- Use two sets of chopsticks and utensils to handle raw and cooked food separately;
- Do not patronise unlicensed food stalls;
- Drink boiled water;
- Do not attempt to sterilise food by using salt, vinegar, wine or wasabi as they are not effective in sterilising food; and
- Wash hands before eating and after using the toilet.

Members of the public may visit the CHP's webpages for more information and preventive advice on [norovirus infection](#).