

CFS urges public not to consume a batch of imported prepackaged smoked salmon suspected to be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (January 17) urged the public not to consume a batch of prepackaged smoked salmon imported from New Zealand due to possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*, a pathogen. The trade should stop using or selling the product concerned immediately if they possess it.

Details of the product are as follows:

Product name: Beech Wood Smoked Slices
Brand: Regal New Zealand King Salmon
Place of origin: New Zealand
Manufacturer: The New Zealand King Salmon Co. Ltd
Importer: PARKnSHOP(HK) Limited
Net weight: 100 grams per pack
Batch code: M362D
Expiry date: January 28, 2019

"The CFS received a notification from the New Zealand concerned authorities through the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) that the abovementioned product might have been contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* and is being recalled. According to the information provided by INFOSAN, a local importer, PARKnSHOP(HK) Limited has imported the affected product into Hong Kong," a spokesman for the CFS said.

The CFS immediately contacted the importer concerned for follow-up. Preliminary investigation showed that the importer had imported 60 packs of the above-mentioned batch of product and some of it was sold. The CFS has instructed the importer to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of product and initiate a recall. Enquiries about the recall can be made to the importer's hotline at 2606 8658 during office hours.

"*Listeria monocytogenes* can be easily destroyed by cooking but can survive and multiply at refrigerator temperature. Most healthy individuals do not develop symptoms or only have mild symptoms like fever, muscle pain, headache, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea when infected. However, severe complications such as septicemia, meningitis or even death may occur in newborns, the elderly and those with a weaker immune system. Although infected pregnant women may just experience mild symptoms generally, the infection of *Listeria monocytogenes* may cause miscarriage, infant death, preterm birth, or severe infection in newborns," the spokesman said.

The spokesman urged consumers not to consume the affected products if

they have bought any. The trade should also stop using or selling the product concerned immediately if they possess them.

The CFS will alert the trade to the incident, continue to follow up and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and outbreaks of influenza A at primary school and kindergartens

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (January 17) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection, as well as four influenza A outbreaks at a primary school in Eastern District and three kindergartens in Sha Tin, Kowloon City and Central.

The case of severe paediatric influenza A infection involves a 6-year-old boy with good past health. He has presented with fever, cough and runny nose since January 5. He later developed drowsiness and confusion and was admitted to Queen Mary Hospital for management on January 9. He is now in a stable condition. His nasopharyngeal aspirate tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection and encephalopathy.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had received seasonal influenza vaccination for the current season and had no travel history during the incubation period. His younger sister and brother with recent upper respiratory symptoms earlier sought medical attention without admission and have been in a stable condition. His other home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far.

Regarding outbreaks at schools, the outbreak at the primary school in Eastern District affected 11 boys and nine girls, aged 5 to 11, who have developed fever, cough and sore throat since January 7. Nineteen of them sought medical attention but none required hospitalisation. They are all in a stable condition. The nasopharyngeal swab specimens of two affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

The outbreak at the kindergarten in Sha Tin affected 12 boys and 10 girls, aged 3 to 5, who have developed similar symptoms since January 8. All of them sought medical attention. Three students required hospitalisation and one was discharged following treatment. All patients are in a stable

condition. The respiratory specimens of two affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

The outbreak at the kindergarten in Kowloon City involves 12 boys and eight girls, aged 3 to 5, who have developed similar symptoms since January 5. All of them sought medical attention. Five students required hospitalisation and were discharged following treatment. All patients are in a stable condition. The respiratory specimens of seven affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

The outbreak at the kindergarten in Central involves three boys and 20 girls, aged 3 to 6, who have developed similar symptoms since January 9. Fifteen of them sought medical attention. Among them, one student required hospitalisation and was discharged following treatment. All patients are in a stable condition. The nasopharyngeal swab specimens of two affected students tested positive for influenza A virus upon laboratory testing.

Officers of the CHP have conducted site visits to the four schools and advised the schools to adopt infection control measures against respiratory infections. The schools have been put under medical surveillance.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "To prevent outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory infections, it is of prime importance that children with fever, regardless of the presence of respiratory symptoms, should not be allowed to attend school. They should seek medical advice and avoid school till 48 hours after the fever has subsided. Schools should also measure and record students' body temperature properly."

Schools are reminded to follow the [Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases](#) on preventive and control measures as well as management of outbreaks, which should be reported to the CHP for prompt follow-up.

"Particularly, children, people aged 50 to 64 years, the elderly and those with underlying illnesses who have not yet received influenza vaccination this season are urged to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent seasonal influenza as it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body after vaccination. They should promptly seek medical advice if influenza-like symptoms develop so that appropriate treatment can be initiated as early as possible to prevent potential complications. Parents and carers are reminded to render assistance in prevention, care and control for vulnerable people," the spokesman added.

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, the public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against influenza and other respiratory illnesses. For more information, please visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#).

Man arrested for suspected illegal sale of unregistered pharmaceutical products (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (January 17) conducted an operation against the sale of unregistered pharmaceutical products, during which a 31-year-old man was arrested by the Police for suspected illegal sale of unregistered pharmaceutical products and Part 1 poisons.

â€‹ Acting upon a public complaint, some pharmaceutical products for slimming and muscle pain were found offered for sale via a social media platform and the Internet. The products are labelled in Japanese and do not bear Hong Kong pharmaceutical product registration numbers.

â€‹ The products for slimming are believed to contain frusemide, rosuvastatin or levothyroxine while the product for muscle pain is believed to contain felbinac. The above ingredients are all Part 1 poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap 138).

â€‹ Frusemide is a diuretic and its side effects include low blood pressure and electrolyte imbalance. Rosuvastatin is used for the treatment of hypercholesterolemia and its side effects include muscle pain and headache. Levothyroxine is used for the treatment of hypothyroidism and its side effects include fast and irregular heart beat and hypertension. Felbinac is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug used topically to relieve pain. Inappropriate use of felbinac may cause erythema and dermatitis.

â€‹ Products containing the above ingredients should only be used upon the advice of a medical practitioner and be supplied by a pharmacy under the supervision of a registered pharmacist. Products containing frusemide, rosuvastatin or levothyroxine are also prescription medicines.

â€‹ According to the Ordinance, all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be legally sold in the market. Illegal sale or possession of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

â€‹ The DH's investigation is ongoing.

â€‹ The DH spokesman strongly urged members of the public not to buy products of unknown or doubtful composition, or to consume products from unknown sources. All registered pharmaceutical products carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format HK-XXXXX. Safety, quality and efficacy of unregistered pharmaceutical products are not guaranteed.

Weight control should be achieved through a balanced diet and appropriate exercise. The public should consult healthcare professionals before using any medication for weight control. The public may visit the website of the Drug Office of the DH for [health messages on weight control and slimming products](#) and [information on slimming products with undeclared Western drug ingredients](#).

People who have purchased the above products should stop using them and consult healthcare professionals for advice if they are in doubt or feeling unwell after use. They can submit the products to the DH's Drug Office at Room 1856, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, during office hours for disposal.



[Update on cluster of Influenza A cases in Kowloon Hospital](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of patients infected with Influenza A in a male ward of the Department of Psychiatry, the spokesperson for Kowloon Hospital gave the following update today (January 17):

Two more male patients (aged 28 and 47) and one staff member in the ward presented with upper respiratory tract infection symptoms. Clinical tests were arranged and the test results were positive for Influenza A. The patients concerned are being treated under isolation and are in stable condition. The staff member is currently on sick leave.

Admission and visiting have been suspended in the ward concerned. Infection control measures have already been stepped up according to established guidelines. All other patients in the ward are under close surveillance.

The cases have been reported to Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

Composite Interest Rate: End of December 2018

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (January 17) the composite interest rate at the end of December 2018.*

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, increased by 11 basis points to 0.89 per cent at the end of December 2018, from 0.78 per cent at the end of November 2018 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The rise in composite interest rate reflected increases in the weighted funding cost for both deposits and interbank funds during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of December 2018 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk). The next data release is scheduled for February 19, 2019 and will provide the composite interest rate at the end of January 2019.

* The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest bearing liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90 per cent of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.