

CFS urges public not to consume a kind of bottled fruit juice drink contaminated with patulin

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (May 22) announced that a sample of a bottled fruit juice drink produced in Hong Kong was found to be contaminated with a mycotoxin, patulin, at a level exceeding the action level adopted by the CFS. Follow-up is in progress.

"Following up on a food complaint, the CFS collected the above-mentioned sample at a retail outlet in Mong Kok for testing. The test result showed that the sample contained patulin at a level of 63 parts per billion (ppb), exceeding the action level of 50 ppb adopted by the CFS. The level is the same as the standard of the Codex Alimentarius Commission on patulin in apples or apple juice," a CFS spokesman said.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: DR. DETOX – ORIGINAL
Brand: bless
Place of origin: Hong Kong
Distributor: Bless International Group Limited
Volume: 270 millilitres
Use-by date: July 5, 2020

The CFS has informed the manufacturer/distributor concerned of the irregularity, and the manufacturer/distributor has stopped sale and removed from shelves all batches of the affected product and initiated a recall of the affected batch of the product according to the CFS' instruction. Members of the public may call the company's hotline at 2412 1008 for enquiries about the recall during office hours. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence.

"Patulin mostly occurs in rotten apple and its products. Animal studies showed that ingesting high doses of patulin can induce liver, spleen and kidney damage, as well as toxicity to the immune system. For humans, nausea, gastrointestinal disturbances and vomiting have been reported," the spokesman said.

According to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the case and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health. Investigation is ongoing.

Government announces mechanism for directors of listed companies or listing applicants to apply for exemption from compulsory quarantine arrangement

The Government announced today (May 22) that directors of companies listed on the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong (SEHK) or directors of companies applying for listing on the SEHK (listing applicants) who (i) are on duty travel from the Mainland to Hong Kong or (ii) return from duty travel from the Mainland to Hong Kong and satisfy certain eligibility criteria may apply for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement.

Announcing the exemption arrangement, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, said, "We have to safeguard public health while at the same time take into account the need for Hong Kong's economic development. The arrangement will enable directors of Hong Kong-listed companies and listing applicants to perform essential business activities which are in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development, including traveling to the Mainland or Hong Kong to attend shareholders' meetings or regulatory meetings to comply with the obligations under relevant Ordinances or other regulatory instruments, such as the Listing Rules."

The Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) is in force until June 7, 2020. According to section 4(1)(b) of the Regulation, the Chief Secretary for Administration may designate any person or category of persons for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement if he is satisfied that the person's or persons' travelling is necessary for purposes relating to, among others, business activities in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development.

Pursuant to the above-mentioned provision, the Chief Secretary for Administration has designated the following category of persons for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement:

Directors of companies listed on the SEHK or directors of companies applying for listing on the SEHK who are on duty travel from the Mainland to Hong Kong, or return from duty travel from the Mainland to Hong Kong. The purpose of such travel is recognised as essential to the operation of the listed companies or listing applicants.

During any specified time period, each of the listed companies or listing applicants can only nominate a maximum of two directors for the exemption. The specific duties that are recognised as essential to the

operation of the listed companies or listing applicants and hence eligible for exemption are as follows:

(a) travelling to Hong Kong from the Mainland to attend shareholders' meetings of listed companies held in Hong Kong (including Annual General Meetings, Extraordinary General Meetings and Special General Meetings);

(b) travelling to Hong Kong from the Mainland to attend hearings held by the SEHK, including listing hearings, disciplinary hearings and review hearings; and

(c) returning to Hong Kong after travelling to the Mainland for attending shareholders' meetings of Hong Kong-listed companies (including Annual General Meetings, Extraordinary General Meetings and Special General Meetings).

The period of stay in Hong Kong (for directors of listed companies or listing applicants coming from the Mainland to Hong Kong) and in the Mainland (for directors of listed companies returning from the Mainland to Hong Kong) should be kept to the minimum. For eligible directors travelling to Hong Kong from the Mainland, the date of arriving in Hong Kong should not be earlier than the day immediately before the relevant meeting/hearing date, unless constrained by practical circumstances (including transportation). For eligible directors returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland, the date of arriving in Hong Kong should not be later than the day immediately after the completion of the meeting/hearing unless constrained by practical circumstances (including transportation).

The exempted persons will also be subject to certain conditions. For example, an exempted person must only travel to and stay in the area/city where the specified duties are performed, and must take every precautionary measure to ensure personal hygiene and avoid unnecessary social contact. After the persons' arrival in or return to Hong Kong, they will be subject to medical surveillance arranged by the Department of Health for a period of 14 days. The persons will be required to wear masks and check body temperature daily, and report to the Department of Health on any discomfort.

The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) will process applications with the administrative support of the SEHK. To apply for an exemption, an application form should be completed by the listed company or listing applicant and be returned to the SEHK with relevant supporting documents. The FSTB will issue letters to the exempted persons with the conditions for exemption. Details of the application procedures are available at the SEHK's website (www.hkex.com.hk/-/media/HKEX-Market/Listing/Rules-and-Guidance/Other-Resources/Listed-Issuers/Joint-Statement-with-SFC/Application_Form_for_Exemption_on_Duty_Travel.pdf).

All exempted persons should note that currently travellers to the Mainland would still be subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement imposed by the Mainland authorities. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is discussing with authorities in the

Mainland on mutual recognition of COVID-19 testing results conducted by recognised medical laboratories, with a view to exempting the quarantine requirement for Hong Kong travellers to the Mainland. Details of the arrangement will be announced when available.

[Hong Kong Customs ties in compliance promotion with enforcement operation and investigates law violation case involving surgical masks \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs has conducted a spot-check enforcement operation codenamed "Guardian" on protective items since January this year. In view of the situation in which local manufacturers have started to produce surgical masks one after another, Customs has further expanded the scope of the operation since early April through an outreach programme to get in touch with local mask manufacturers and online surgical mask retailers to carry out compliance promotion. A two-pronged approach was adopted from source to the retail level to ensure that surgical masks sold in the market comply with the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) and the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO). At the same time, acting on complaints and follow-up investigation, Customs today (May 22) arrested a man and seized 935 boxes of surgical masks suspected of violating the TDO.

The compliance promotion outreach programme has made good progress since its launch nearly two months ago. Up till now, Customs has been in touch with over 30 manufacturers and online retail traders. Special reminders have been given to them on strict compliance with relevant laws and stating that surgical masks produced and sold by them should undergo tests to ensure the masks comply with the general safety requirements. Also, all labels or trade descriptions attached with the products have to be correct. Customs also reminded them that they should provide test reports issued by laboratories to prove the authenticity of the trade descriptions when selling surgical masks. No company has been found violating the relevant ordinances during spot checks of the outreach programme.

Apart from strengthening compliance promotion work at the production source level, Customs is also continuing to conduct enforcement operations. Customs earlier received information alleging an online trader supplied through restaurants a type of surgical mask with suspected false claims of origin and efficiency. The product was labelled with "NOT MADE IN CHINA", "ASTM Level 1", "BFE \geq 95%", "Fluid Resistance" and "PFE \geq 95%". Upon receiving the allegation, Customs conducted a test-buy operation and follow-up investigation.

Customs sent the test-bought sample to the laboratory for tests on bacterial counts to see whether there is any violation of the CGSO and test results revealed that the sample is in compliance with the bacterial count standard. However, as the trader had failed to provide authentication to prove that the masks comply with the labelled claims, Customs today took enforcement action and searched the trader's premises at the registered address in San Po Kong. A total of 32 725 surgical masks suspected of violating the TD0, packed in 935 boxes of 35 pieces each and with an estimated market value of about \$93,500, were seized. A representative of the trader was arrested for suspected violation of the TD0.

The arrested man, aged 24, has been released on bail. Investigation of the case is ongoing and the likelihood of further arrests is not excluded. Customs appeals to members of the public to stop using the type of surgical mask as the trader could not provide proof for the claims as labelled.

The "Guardian" operation has been running for nearly four months as of yesterday (May 21) since its launch on January 27 this year. More than 4 700 officers have been mobilised to conduct over 31 000 inspections at retail spots, manufacturers and online traders.

Under the TD0, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the CGSO, it is an offence to import, manufacture or supply consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirements for consumer goods. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years on a subsequent conviction.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TD0 or the CGSO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



[Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order](#)

A 51-year-old man was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for four weeks by the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (May 22) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C).

The man was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he must conduct quarantine at the place of quarantine for 14 days. Before the expiry of the quarantine order, he left the place of quarantine without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer and was stopped by staff of the Immigration Department at Shenzhen Bay Control Point on March 25. He was charged with contravening sections 8(1) and 8(5) of the Regulation and was sentenced by the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today to immediate imprisonment for four weeks.

A spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) said the sentence sends a clear message to the community that breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and that the Government will not tolerate such actions. The spokesman reiterated that compliance with quarantine orders is of paramount importance in Hong Kong's fight against COVID-19.

Pursuant to the Regulation, save for exempted persons, all persons who have stayed in the Mainland, Macao or Taiwan in the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong, regardless of their nationality or travel documents, will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Moreover, pursuant to the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E), starting from March 19, all persons arriving from countries or territories outside China would also be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. The DH solemnly reminds persons under quarantine to comply with the statutory requirements and conduct quarantine for 14 days.

[Update on suspected food poisoning cases](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today

(May 22) provided an update on its investigation into two suspected food poisoning cases involving sandwiches announced yesterday (May 21), and reminded the public to maintain personal, food and environmental hygiene to prevent food-borne diseases.

Subsequent to its follow-up investigation, the CHP has identified nine more clusters of suspected food poisoning relating to those sandwiches. The newly reported clusters involved five males and 15 females aged 1 to 68. They developed gastroenteritis symptoms including abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever about four to 43 hours after consuming the sandwiches between May 18 and 21. Among them, 16 sought medical consultation and five required hospitalisation.

All affected persons are now in stable condition. Investigations are proceeding.

"Prolonged storage of food at room temperature may allow pathogens to grow and produce toxins. Members of the public should avoid consuming cooked or ready-to-eat food that has been kept at room temperature for several hours," a spokesman for the CHP said.

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

- 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.