

## **Alert on herbal aconitum alkaloid poisoning**

The Department of Health (DH) has recently received notification of a confirmed case of aconitum alkaloid poisoning relating to consumption of a Chinese herb, processed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii, prescribed by a registered Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP) in Chai Wan. The patient fully recovered after treatment in a hospital. The likely contributing factor for this poisoning event is overdose of processed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii. Field investigation did not identify gross contamination of other Chinese herbs. According to the CMP's information, other patients prescribed with processed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii did not suffer from similar symptoms.

Processed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii is a toxic Chinese herb containing aconitum alkaloids and is indicated for pain relief. Prolonged decoction to reduce its toxicity is required before it can be safely consumed orally. Its overdose can cause perioral and limb numbness, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, weak pulses and shortness of breath. In severe cases, it may be fatal.

DH advises CMP to draw reference to relevant herbal standards in their prescription. Members of the public are also advised to follow CMP's instructions in the preparation and consumption of Chinese herbs. They should seek medical advice as soon as possible if there is any discomfort after taking the herbs.

The case has been referred to the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong for consideration of disciplinary action to the CMP.

Chinese Medicine Division,  
Department of Health  
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