

### **Alert on Aconitum Alkaloid Poisoning**

The Department of Health (DH) has recently received notification of a confirmed case of aconitum alkaloid poisoning from the Hospital Authority related to consumption of processed Radix Aconiti Lateralis, prescribed by a registered Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP) in Sheung Shui. The patient has recovered after receiving treatment and has been discharged from the hospital. Laboratory analysis confirmed that in the patient's urine sample, aconitum alkaloids and their hydrolyzed products were detected. The suspected contributing factor for this poisoning event is overdose of processed Radix Aconiti Lateralis.

Processed Radix Aconiti Lateralis is a Chinese herb containing aconitum alkaloids and could be indicated for cold syndrome. Prolonged decoction to reduce its toxicity is required before oral consumption. If used improperly, aconitum alkaloids can cause perioral and limb numbness, dizziness, nausea, diarrhoea, weak pulses and shortness of breath. It can be fatal in severe case.

DH advises CMPs to draw reference to relevant herbal standards in their prescription. Particular care should be taken when CMPs prescribe toxic Chinese herbs. Their doses, combination and decoction should be tailored to patients' clinical status and based on relevant literature.

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 herbal medicines.

DH will refer this case to the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong to follow up whether there is inappropriate practice of the CMP.

Members of the public may visit the website of DH ([http://www.cmd.gov.hk/html/b5/health\\_info/pamphlet/The\\_safe\\_use\\_of\\_Chinese\\_medicines\\_containing\\_aconitum\\_alkaloids.html](http://www.cmd.gov.hk/html/b5/health_info/pamphlet/The_safe_use_of_Chinese_medicines_containing_aconitum_alkaloids.html)) for the safe use of Chinese medicines containing aconitum alkaloids.

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