

Department of Disease Control

Weekly Disease Forecast No.276_Wild Yam Food Poisoning (30 August - 5 September 2020)

From the Department of Disease Control surveillance system, there were 11 wild yam food poisoning incidents with 172 cases during the past 5 years (2016 to the present). The clusters ranged from 3 to 32 cases. Among the 36 severe cases admitted in the hospitals, 2 had died). Most incidents occurred in August, December, September and March. Almost all (9 incidents) occurred in the northeastern region while one incident each was found in the southern and eastern regions.

This month (August), there have been 2 wild yam food poisoning incidents with 27 cases (no deaths) from 2 provinces, i.e. Nakhonphanom and Nakhonratchasima. Most patients developed dizziness, nausea and vomiting. Investigation revealed that the natural toxin was not removed before cooking due to misbelief that it was done by the seller.

According to this week disease forecast, there might be sporadic wild yam food poisoning cases during this rainy season.



Wild yam is a twining vine, arising from tuberous roots. Tubers contain starch and the poisonous alkaloid dioscorine, a neuromuscular blocking agent. Victims usually develop itching of the mouth, tongue and throat, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and blurred vision. Severe symptoms include altered consciousness, muscle paralysis and seizures or even death.

The National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC) advises that the removal of natural toxin from tubers (detoxification technique) requires thin slicing of yam, then soaking it in concentrated salted water for at least three days while keep changing the salted water. The other technique is placing it in a sac to re-soak in a river or flowing water for at least seven days. However, all techniques are not proved to remove 100% of the toxin.

The Department of Disease Control advises people to beware of wild yam roots consumption especially during rainy season. People should buy wild yam roots only from trusted sources that have done a proper detoxification technique. In case of doubt, removal of natural toxin from tubers has to be done before consumption. Children should not be allowed to eat wild yam roots as only small amount of toxin can cause them severe symptoms. In case of developing the mentioned symptoms, seeking medical treatment at the hospital is urgently needed.

For queries or additional information, please call Ramathibodi Poison Center hotline 1367 or DDC hotline 1422.