

14 fall ill after eating Shenzhen vegetables

FOURTEEN people have suffered food poisoning in the past week after eating contaminated water spinach believed to have been imported from Shenzhen.

The cases follow an outbreak of poisoning in February when toxic pesticides banned in both Hongkong and China were found to have been sprayed on to the vegetables *pak choi* and *choi sum* causing 64 people to be treated in hospital.

That outbreak prompted the Department of Health to step up the screening of imported vegetables, with plans to increase testing from 10 samples a day to 60 by the summer.

In carrying out checks last week, government health inspectors found 1,000 kilograms of pesticide-laced water spinach imported from Shenzhen.

A spokesman for the department yesterday said the new cases were mild,

although eight victims were detained in hospital. The others were released after treatment.

He appealed to the public to wash and blanch vegetables thoroughly before cooking.

Those taken ill were from North Point, Shamshuipo and Wong Tai Sin.

Chinese authorities have been told and given the name of the farm thought to have grown the spinach.