



06 December 2006

Update on public health issues related to Polonium-210 investigation

The Health Protection Agency is continuing to provide expert advice on the public health issues surrounding the death of Mr Alexander Litvinenko.

Test results update

- **137** urine samples so far tested by the Agency have found nothing of concern. The Agency will be contacting these people to inform them of their results
- This total includes all the **Itsu sushi restaurant staff** asked to provide urine samples – all found nothing of concern
- The only urine sample that the Agency has examined that has shown higher levels of Polonium-210 (Po-210), relates to an adult member of Mr Litvinenko's family. These levels will not result in any illness in the short term and the results are reassuring in that any increased risk in the long term is likely to be very small

On the basis of the monitoring results received so far the Health Protection Agency can reassure members of the public that the risk of having been exposed to polonium-210 remains low. It can only represent a radiation hazard if it is taken into the body – by breathing it in, by taking it into the mouth, or if it gets into a wound. It is not a radiological hazard as long as it remains outside the body. Most traces of it can be eliminated through hand-washing, or washing machine and dishwasher cycles for clothes, plates etc.

It is important to remember that very small amounts of Polonium-210 occur naturally within the environment, in the air we breathe and the food we eat. It is also present in cigarettes. Everybody has low levels of Polonium-210 in their bodies which are not harmful to health and any extra exposure does not automatically mean the individual concerned will suffer any long-term health effects.

Location update

- **1 Cavendish Place , W1G, London** – monitoring has been completed in the key public areas and there is no public health concern
- **Parkes Hotel, in Beaufort Gardens** – monitoring has been completed and traces of localised contamination found. These were remediated and there is no public health concern

General update

The Agency's public health follow-up has included testing urine samples from those in close contact with Mr Litvinenko, those who worked or were present in the affected areas and, where appropriate, those who called for advice via NHS Direct.

- As of midnight Tues, 5 Dec NHS Direct had received **3233** calls since HPA advice was issued on Sat Nov 25
- Of those, as of 5pm Tues, 5 Dec, the HPA had followed up **244** people who it was assessed should be investigated further
- The total number of people – as of 5pm, Tues 5 Dec - referred as a precaution to a specialist outpatient assessment clinic for possible radiological exposure assessment is **28** (26 from NHS Direct, and 2 via other routes)
- As a precaution **71** healthcare staff have been asked to provide urine samples for testing as of 8am, Weds, 6 Dec

The police investigation continues. We will provide further public information as appropriate.

Notes to Editors:

1. The HPA advice is that anyone who was in the Itsu restaurant, or who was in The Pine Bar or the restaurant of the Millennium Hotel on 1 November should contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 where they will be given advice on what to do.
2. If you are an overseas visitor and were in the Itsu restaurant, or The Pine Bar or the restaurant of the Millennium Hotel on 1 November you should email the Health Protection Agency for advice: overseasadvice@hpa.org.uk. If you do not have access to email you can contact NHS Direct on 00 (44) 845 4647 but only via a mobile telephone if you are calling from abroad. (If this does not connect you please try 0845 46 47 instead – again only from a mobile)
3. Further information is available on www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk and www.hpa.org.uk

4. Media enquiries to HPA London press office on 020 7759 2824 or 020 7759 2834 or HPA CRCE press office on 01235 822 678 or 01235 822 744. If you are calling out of hours please use 020 8200 4400.