



South Central District Health

Keeping your family & community healthy
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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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AVOID UNWANTED PICNIC GUESTS

Some unwanted guests may show up at your summer picnic on unwashed hands and in poorly prepared foods. South Central District Health cautions everyone for this upcoming holiday week and the whole summer to be especially cautious of e-coli infections from under-cooked hamburgers, unwashed hands and foods contaminated from unsanitary preparation areas or improper storage.

Since May 15, twelve cases of E. coli 0157:H7 infection have been reported in Southern Idaho residents. At least six of these cases have required hospitalization. Five of these cases have developed Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS), a severe complication of E. coli infection especially in children under the age of five.

Possible sources of E. coli include undercooked beef (especially ground beef), contact with farm animals and raw (unpasteurized) milk. Spread may also occur through fecal-oral transmission from an ill person by direct contamination of another person or by contamination of food or water. Although 11 of the above cases can be traced to exposure from an ill person in the patient's family, no common source outbreaks are suspected. Other important possible sources of infection are contaminated stream water, swimming pools, contact with animal waste through gardening, farming, cattle and dairy work as well as consumption of fruit that has dropped to the ground.

Nationwide, cases of E. coli 0157 H:7 have been linked to common food sources such as hamburger. At this time none of the current cases are associated with national outbreaks or recalls of contaminated hamburger, although testing is ongoing. All cultures of E. coli are tested at the Idaho State Bureau of Laboratories and submitted to a national database to determine any matches to strains of E. coli in other states, which can take up to two weeks to complete.

There are many different types of E. coli bacteria. Some types do not cause illness while others such as E. coli 0157:H7 can cause severe diarrhea. Symptoms of E. coli infection include: mild to severe diarrhea, which may become bloody; nausea; vomiting and fever. Symptoms usually begin 4-6 days after exposure to the bacteria. Bloody diarrhea usually begins 1-2 days after the other symptoms. Persons experiencing bloody diarrhea should talk to their physician about their symptoms. Persons experiencing these symptoms should not take antibiotics unless directed by

their physician. Complications such as HUS can occur during severe cases of this infection. HUS can result in kidney damage or kidney failure.

The following are important prevention measures:

1. Wash hands before eating, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, such as Purel, if soap and water are not available.
2. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
3. Avoid eating raw or rare meat or poultry. Ground meat should be cooked to 160° F.
4. Always disinfect cutting boards and counter tops after contact with raw meat or poultry.
5. Wash hands after handling raw meat or poultry and before food preparation.
6. Wash hands after using the toilet and diapering children.
7. Do not drink unpasteurized milk or other dairy products.
8. Avoid drinking untreated surface water (streams or lakes).
9. Do not allow children with diarrhea to enter swimming pools.
10. Wash all vegetables and fruit. (Do not use detergent or bleach since these may be absorbed into the fruit or vegetable.)
11. Always wash or peel fruit that has dropped to the ground. This is especially important for fruit from trees located in pasture areas where animals are present.
12. Wash hands after handling animals. This is especially important with children when visiting fairs and petting zoos.

If you have any questions, please contact Karin Frodin, RN Epidemiologist 737-5974 or Tom Machala, Director of Communicable Disease and Prevention 737-5963.

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