



JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

615 Sheridan Street ♦ Port Townsend ♦ Washington ♦ 98368
www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org

Health Advisory – Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* O121 Infections,

May 22, 2014

To: Jefferson County Health Care Providers

From: Tom Locke, MD, MPH, Jefferson County Health Officer

Action requested:

- **Be aware of recent Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC) O121 infections associated with clover sprout consumption.**
- **Consider STEC infection in all persons with bloody diarrhea and persons with bloody or non-bloody diarrhea and a history of sprout consumption during the exposure period (usually 3-4 days but may be 1-10 days before onset of symptoms).**
- **In patients with symptoms compatible with STEC infection, collect a stool specimen and request *E. coli* testing by culture and Shiga toxin test.**
 - If bloody diarrhea is present, laboratory evaluation should include a complete blood count, serum electrolytes, BUN, and creatinine
 - Shiga toxin immunoassays should be obtained in addition to cultures, but should not replace culture on a sorbitol MacConkey agar plate

Report confirmed or suspected STEC cases immediately to Public Health at 385-9400, fax 385-9401.

Obtain the following history during the exposure period (1 to 10 days before symptom onset):

- Dietary history, including: meats, raw produce, unpasteurized juices or dairy products, and **sprouts**
- Group and restaurant meals, including meal dates, restaurant names, and restaurant addresses
- Travel history with travel dates and destinations
- Animal exposures (pets, farms, etc.)

Background

Ten recent cases of Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* O121 infections have been reported from Washington State (including King and Spokane County) and Idaho. Nine of the cases reported consuming raw clover sprouts during their exposure period. The WA Department of Health issued a press release on 5/21/14 reporting results from initial investigations indicate a strong link to eating raw clover sprouts produced by Evergreen Fresh Sprouts, LLC of Idaho.

Aldrich's Market and the Food Coop of Port Townsend are on the list of retailers supplied with this product. JCPH contacted them on 5/21/2014 recommending that they pull the product from the shelves and notify customers not to consume the product raw until further notice.

Since 1996, at least 30 nationally reported outbreaks of foodborne illness associated with different types of raw and lightly cooked sprouts have occurred. Most of these outbreaks were caused by *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. In most sprout outbreaks, the restaurant is not the source of the contamination, which usually happens when the seeds are grown or harvested and is often impossible to wash off.

Resources:

CDC STEC and *E. coli* FAQ: www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general/index.html

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