

Communicable Disease Control & Prevention 101 Grove Street, Room 408 San Francisco, CA 94102

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HEALTH ADVISORY AUGUST 7, 2006

CONTAMINATED OYSTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CASES OF Vibrio parahaemolyticus

Raw oysters from Washington State have caused gastrointestinal illness with *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in many people across the country including San Francisco. Approximately 70 people with this infection have been reported nationally. To date the San Francisco Department of Health (SFDPH) has received reports of 12 confirmed cases of *V. parahaemolyticus*.

On July 27th the Washington State Department of Health issued recalls on oyster products from various parts of the state. The recall involves informing all shellfish wholesalers and distributors of this recall. Wholesalers typically notify and advise retailers; however, the SDFPH, Environmental Health Section is working with the California Department of Health Services in contacting all retail outlets to assure they are aware of the hazard.

On August 4th the California Department of Health Services and the SFDPH issued press releases advising the public of the risk of eating raw oysters. People who have recently eaten raw or undercooked oysters and are experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms have been advised to contact their physician.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF ALL CLINICIANS:

- 1. **Consider** *V. parahaemolyticus* in persons presenting with gastrointestinal illness.
- 2. **Obtain** a food history including a history of eating raw or undercooked shellfish.
- 3. **Consider** testing stool for *V. parahaemolyticus*. Indicate on the laboratory request slip that *V. parahaemolyticus* is suspected.
- 4. **Report** <u>laboratory confirmed</u> cases of *V. parahaemolyticus* to the **Communicable Disease Control Unit (CDCU) at 554-2830**.

Vibrio parahaemolyticus is a bacterium commonly found in saltwater environments throughout the United States. Levels of this pathogen increase when water temperatures rise during the summer months. Inadequate refrigeration following harvest, transport and storage may also allow the bacteria to multiply to levels that may cause illness when shellfish are eaten raw. Illness may also occur if shellfish are undercooked or if there is cross-contamination of food.

Gastroenteritis is the most common clinical manifestations of *V. parahaemolyticus*. Illness onset generally occurs within 12 to 24 hours after ingesting raw shellfish, but can range from 4 to 30 hours. Illness begins with watery diarrhea often accompanied by mild to moderately severe cramping and abdominal pain. Low-grade fever, mild chills, headache can also occur. Occasionally dysentery occurs with mucoid or bloody diarrhea, high fever and high WBC count. Duration of illness ranges from 1 to 7 days.

Diagnosis is confirmed by isolating *V. parahaemolyticus* from the stool of patients on specialized culture media.

Although most cases do not require antibiotic treatment, severe cases can be treated with fluoroquinolones, doxycycline or 3rd generation cephalosporins.

Categories of urgency levels

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action