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Alaska Public Health Advisory

Vibrio parahaemolyticus associated with consumption of raw oysters

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Since July 15, the Alaska Section of Epidemiology has received reports of three cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (*Vp*) infection in Alaskans who consumed raw oysters served in three different Alaska restaurants. The oysters were traced back to three separate suppliers from Washington State; no more oysters from those lots are locally available. Monitoring for *Vp* in WA continues through their shellfish program; however, not all lots are tested for *Vp* and so it is possible that additional oysters that contain *Vp* will be shipped to Alaska restaurants or retailers. At this point, no shipments of oysters from WA have been embargoed from any growing areas in the Pacific Northwest; however, this may occur if there are additional cases detected.

Vp causes an acute gastroenteritis usually within 12 to 24 hours (range 4-96 hours) after consumption of raw oysters. Infections are not usually communicable from person-to-person. Typically, *Vp* infection causes illness of moderate severity with symptoms lasting from 1-7 days. Symptoms include watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever and headache.

Recommendations:

1. **Please contact the Section of Epidemiology to report suspected cases of *Vp*. Case-patients will be interviewed to determine location of exposure and trace-back of product consumed. Call 907-269-8000 Mon–Fri 8 AM to 5 PM, or 800-478-0084 afterhours.**
2. Health care providers should collect a stool specimen to test specifically for *V. parahaemolyticus* in any patient who presents with acute gastroenteritis within 4 days of consuming raw oysters.
3. Stool specimens can be submitted to the Alaska State Public Health Laboratory in Anchorage and are tested free of charge. See the following website for submission forms and instructions: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/labs/publications/>
4. Health care providers should educate their patients (particularly children and immune compromised persons) about the risks associated with eating raw seafood.
5. For more information about *Vp*, please see the following website http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease_listing/vibriop_gi.html

Categories of Health Alert messages:

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.

This message is sent to you as a service of the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, through the Section of Epidemiology, 3601 C St, Suite 540, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, (907) 269-8000. The Section of Epidemiology maintains a 24-hour Emergency Number, 1-800-478-0084. Internet site: <http://www.epi.Alaska.gov>.