

The following message was sent to you through the Alaska Public Health Alert Network (AK PHAN), a joint message from the Alaska Division of Public Health and the Department of Environmental Conservation. Please share this information with others who may be interested.

[Note: Contact information for the Alaska Section of Epidemiology can be found at the end of this message.](#)

## **Health Advisory**

**February 15, 2013**

### ***Campylobacter* Outbreak Associated with Consumption of Raw Milk**

**Kenai Peninsula, January – February 2013**

The purpose of this Health Advisory is to inform you of a recent and potentially ongoing outbreak of *Campylobacter* infections that have been associated with consuming raw milk.

#### **What is the outbreak?**

*Campylobacter* infection is reportable by state regulations to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' Section of Epidemiology (SOE). Since late January, 2013, four people with confirmed *Campylobacter* infection and at least one person with probable infection reported consuming raw (unpasteurized) milk in the few days preceding illness. One infant with close contact to a confirmed case-patient is also suspected of having *Campylobacter* infection. All six reside on the Kenai Peninsula. The *Campylobacter* isolated from the four lab-confirmed cases are a match by molecular techniques (pulsed-field gel electrophoresis, or PFGE). This strain of *Campylobacter* has not been previously identified in Alaska.

#### **What is *Campylobacter* and how do people become infected?**

*Campylobacter* are bacteria that can cause diarrhea (sometimes bloody), abdominal cramping/pain, nausea, vomiting, and fever within 2 to 5 days after exposure. The illness typically lasts from several days to over a week, with variable severity. Some people, especially young children or individuals with compromised immune systems, can develop severe or even life-threatening illness. Infrequently, *Campylobacter* infection leads to long-term consequences. Some people with *Campylobacter* infection develop arthritis, and rarely, some develop a life-threatening disease called Guillain-Barré syndrome that inflames the nerves of the body beginning several weeks after the onset of diarrhea.

Outbreaks of *Campylobacter* are often associated with consumption of unpasteurized milk — one such outbreak, traced to a Mat-Su Valley farm, resulted in 18 illnesses in Alaska in 2011. Other sources of *Campylobacter* infection include consumption of undercooked meat, consumption of

food or water cross-contaminated by raw meat, or contact with feces from infected animals. Human to human transmission can also occur.

### **What can you do?**

- If you are currently experiencing symptoms as described above, please contact your health care provider and alert them to this Advisory.
- If you have consumed raw milk in 2013 and subsequently developed a diarrheal illness, please contact the Section of Epidemiology to report the illness and get answers to questions you might have. Please call SOE at 907-269-8000 (in Anchorage) or toll free at 1-800-478-0084 and ask to speak to a member of the Epi-Team.
- Please share this Health Advisory with others you know who consume raw milk.

### **Additional resources**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Campylobacter* information:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/campylobacter/>
- General raw milk information:  
<http://www.realrawmilkfacts.com/>
- Alaska 2011 Epidemiology *Bulletins* on raw milk-associated *Campylobacter* outbreak:  
[http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011\\_18.pdf](http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_18.pdf)  
[http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011\\_22.pdf](http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_22.pdf)
- Alaska 2009 Epidemiology *Bulletin* on raw milk:  
[http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2009\\_29.pdf](http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2009_29.pdf)
- Alaska DEH information on raw milk:  
<http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/docs/vet/Dairy/RawMilkSharesFactsheet.PDF>

You are subscribed to the AK Public Health Alert Network for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. This information has recently been updated, and is now available.