



MADISON COUNTY DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

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HEALTH ADVISORY

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HEALTH ADVISORY: ***E. coli* Infections in U.S. Travelers Returning from Germany**

Health Advisory: provides very important information and recommendations for a specific incident or situation that *does not require immediate action*. Advisories will be received by recipients only during normal business hours.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently issued a statement concerning a large outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) O104:H4 in Germany since May 2, 2011. As of June 2, 2011, case counts confirmed by Germany's Robert Koch Institute include 520 patients with hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) – a type of kidney failure that is associated with *E. coli* or STEC infections – and 11 deaths.

In the United States, four *suspected* cases of STEC O104:H4 infections have been identified in persons who recently traveled to Hamburg, Germany, where they were likely exposed. The strain of STEC O104:H4, is very rare. CDC is not aware of any cases of STEC O104:H4 infection ever being previously reported in United States.

Symptoms of STEC infection include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody) and vomiting. If there is fever, it usually is not very high. Most people get better within 5–7 days, but some patients go on to develop HUS—usually about a week after the diarrhea starts. Symptoms of HUS include decreased frequency of urination, feeling very tired, and losing pink color to skin and membranes due to anemia.

The CDC has recommended that any person who has recently traveled to Germany and has signs or symptoms of STEC infection, or HUS, should seek medical care and let the medical provider know about the outbreak in Germany and the importance of being tested for STEC infection.

As a precaution, persons traveling to Germany should avoid eating raw lettuce, tomatoes or cucumbers, particularly in the northern states of Germany (Hamburg, Bremen, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig Holstein), although no specific food has yet been confirmed as the source for the *E. coli* infections. Currently there is no information that any of these foods have been shipped from Europe to the United States.

For the latest updates on the *E. coli* outbreak go to www.cdc.gov/ecoli/.

For more information or questions, contact Madison County Health Department's Communicable Disease Staff at 366-2848.

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