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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATING ELEVATED NUMBER OF SALMONELLA CASES

County Cases Quadruple Over Last Three Weeks

YPSILANTI, Mich., August 24, 2007—The Washtenaw County Public Health Department is actively investigating the cause of 18 confirmed Salmonella cases reported in county residents during the past three weeks. Local and state public health officials are involved in investigating the cluster of cases, but have not yet pinpointed a common source for the bacteria. Typically, 3-4 Salmonella cases are reported in Washtenaw County residents during this time period each year.

While the majority of cases in the Salmonella cluster involve Washtenaw residents, additional cases in counties adjacent to Washtenaw or elsewhere in Michigan have been identified. Some of these individuals have purchased groceries or eaten at establishments within the county. On Thursday, state health officials in Lansing said that Salmonella reports have increased this summer statewide.

Salmonella is a bacterium that can cause severe diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal pain in humans. The bacteria live in the intestinal tracts of humans and other animals, including birds. Salmonella are usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal feces. Contaminated foods are often of animal origin, such as beef, poultry, milk, or eggs, but all foods, including vegetables, may become contaminated. Salmonella may also be transmitted from infected people who do not wash their hands after using the toilet.

County health officials are focusing their investigation on food retailers, distributors, and restaurants that may have provided food products that were contaminated with the Salmonella bacteria. Health Department personnel have been working closely with local health care providers and labs to encourage testing and reporting of individuals ill with Salmonella. Positive stool samples are being sent to the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) state laboratory for analysis. Lab results for a number of cases are still pending. County sanitarians are reinforcing food safety standards in restaurants, focusing on prevention techniques to stop the further transmission of the bacteria.

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<http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>



Health Department officials first noted an increase in the number of Salmonella cases on August 10, when preliminary reports indicated that several individuals had experienced the onset of symptoms between July 29 and August 5. The last known date of symptom onset was on August 16, as reported to the county on August 22. Once preliminary reports of Salmonella cases were confirmed by the state laboratory, MDCH and Washtenaw County health officials alerted health departments and health care providers of the growing number of reports using the statewide Michigan Health Alert Network (MIHAN) and the countywide Washtenaw County Epi Update.

It is still unclear as to whether the suspected outbreak is waning or if there are more cases in the community that have not been detected and reported.

Symptoms of Salmonella Illness

- Headache
- Diarrhea (many loose bowel movements)
- Dehydration (loss of fluids)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach aches
- Fever

Symptoms typically appear 12 to 72 hours after exposure. Sometimes a person can be infected with Salmonella and not feel sick. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without treatment. However, in some, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized. In these patients, the Salmonella infection may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream, and then to other body sites and can cause death unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics. The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.

How is it Prevented?

- Wash your hands and your children's hands after using the toilet, after changing diapers, before eating, before and after making food, and after playing with animals.
- Do not eat raw eggs or unpasteurized milk.
- Cook meat well before eating it. Put leftover cooked food in the refrigerator right after a meal.
- Wash cutting boards and counters with hot, soapy water after cutting raw or cooked meat on them.
- Wash children's toys, the floors children crawl on, and the surfaces they touch with a bleach solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. (Make this solution fresh every day.) Rinse washed toys and surfaces in clean hot water.

How is it Treated?

If you have Salmonella you should:

- Drink plenty of fluids, such as water or juice.
- Not prepare food.
- Wash your hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Clean the bathroom, including the toilet flushing handle, water faucets, and doorknobs, with a bleach solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. (Make this solution fresh every day.)

Children with Salmonella should:

- Drink plenty of fluids, such as water or juice.
- Stay away from other children until they are well.

Food service, health care, or childcare workers should report their illness to their supervisors and not return to work until their illness is over and a medical provider has approved their return to work.

County residents who are experiencing symptoms should contact their health care provider for immediate evaluation and possible treatment. Individuals may also report their illness to the Health Department via the website www.ReportFoodPoisoning.com.

Health care providers with patients exhibiting symptoms should order tests to confirm or exclude the presence of the Salmonella bacteria and, if a patient tests positive, report those results to the Washtenaw County Health Department at (734) 544-6770.

For additional information about Salmonella, visit:

Washtenaw County Public Health Department

<http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>

(734) 544-6700

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/salmonellosis_g.htm#What%20is%20salmonellosis

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