



555 Towner St., P.O. Box 0915
Ypsilanti, MI 48197-0915
Phone (734) 544-6700

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 26, 2010

Contact: Susan R. Cerniglia Public Information Officer, Washtenaw County Public Health
Email: ringle@ewashtenaw.org
Phone: (734) 544-6759

WASHTENAW COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH CONTINUES E.COLI OUTBREAK INVESTIGATION Possible Link to Similar Outbreak in Ohio

YPSILANTI, Mich., April 26, 2010 — In cooperation with multiple agencies, Washtenaw County Public Health continues investigating an outbreak of food-related illness. Preliminary results from the Michigan Department of Community Health indicate that this is a toxin-producing *E. coli* non-0157 strain. Seven of the local cases have been confirmed as *E. coli* non-0157 and are related to one another. Fourteen cases are awaiting laboratory confirmation of *E. coli*. Persons reporting illness consistent with the outbreak were likely exposed between April 7th and April 15th and became ill between April 9th and April 16th. Persons typically experience symptoms three to four days after eating foods contaminated with *E. coli*.

The process of identifying common food sources is complex. Initial findings indicated ill persons were exposed at one or more local eateries. Additional evidence now indicates there may have been a problem related to the distribution of certain foods received locally. The Michigan Department of Agriculture is conducting a traceback to determine whether a common food distributor or supplier may be involved. Similar cases are also under investigation in Ohio. Columbus Public Health in Columbus, OH is reporting five confirmed cases of *E.coli* non-0157, with several more pending confirmation.

“Our investigation is progressing,” says Dr. Diana Torres-Burgos, MD, MPH, Medical Director of Washtenaw County Public Health. “Outbreaks like these are incredibly time-consuming and difficult, and we continue to share the information we can confirm.”

Symptoms of *E. coli* infection include abdominal cramping followed by diarrhea that progressively worsens and is often bloody. Typically, there is no fever. Anyone with similar symptoms should seek medical attention. Individuals are also asked to report suspected *E. coli* illness to Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.

Most persons sickened with *E. coli* recover within a week; however, some infections can be serious. The non-0157 strain of *E. coli* identified in the outbreak is less common, but it is still capable of producing severe illness.

Proper hand washing, food handling and cooking are critical to preventing the spread of foodborne illness. The Washtenaw County Public Health Fact Sheet on *E. coli* is available at:

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/public_health/phcontent/cd_fact_sheets/ecoli.pdf

###