

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Alert Advisory #139 - Seneca Lake State Park Sprayground Gastrointestinal Outbreak - August 19, 2005

On August 17, 2005 New York State Health Commissioner Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H., issued an update concerning the gastrointestinal illnesses suspected to be linked to a spray park attraction at Seneca Lake State Park. The Commissioner also announced the spray park attraction has been closed for the remainder of the 2005 season. The State Health Department is working with local health departments and the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to investigate the outbreak. The review is ongoing.

Dr. Novello is recommending the following precautions:

- Persons who visited the Seneca Lake State Park or family members and/or close contacts of ill individuals who visited the park since July and are experiencing gastrointestinal illness should contact their medical provider and their local health department.
- Health care workers with patient contact and food workers should notify their employer if they are experiencing gastrointestinal illness symptoms before returning to work.
- Children and staff with stomach/intestinal illness should refrain from attending day care. Day care centers should consult with their local health department for recommendations on the timing for return to the day care setting. Children should not be transferred to another day care center.

Dr. Novello also recommends that people take action to minimize the chances of acquiring and spreading illness, including thoroughly washing hands after using the toilet, changing diapers or coming in contact with fecal material in any way. Also, swimmers should avoid swallowing water, especially in lakes, ponds or rivers.

To help prevent the spread of illness, individuals who are experiencing gastrointestinal illness should not swim while they are sick and for two weeks after their symptoms subside.

Health Care providers with patients from Erie County who visited the State Park and are now experiencing gastrointestinal illness should call the Erie County Department of Health at 858-7656 Monday - Friday 8:30-4:30. After hours, you may call 858-2929 and leave a message.

NYSDOH is requesting that medical providers enhance surveillance for gastrointestinal illness in patients at your facility and affiliated clinics. Patients who present with gastrointestinal symptoms including nausea, cramps, diarrhea, vomiting, or fever should be interviewed to determine if they visited Seneca Lake State Park. Stool specimens should be obtained from patients meeting the above criteria and submitted to your local laboratory for bacterial, viral, and parasitic testing. Ova and parasite (O&P) with Cryptosporidium testing should specifically be requested.

Stool for O&P testing should be submitted to the laboratory in 10% formalin. For those patients who test positive for *Cryptosporidium*, a portion of the stool in formalin (preferably 5 ml or more) should be forwarded to NYSDOH Wadsworth Center. If there are questions on laboratory testing, please contact Wadsworth Center at (518) 474-4177.

Any identified increase in cases of gastrointestinal illness or individual cases of gastrointestinal illness associated with the Seneca Lake State Park should be reported promptly to the Erie County Health Department at (716) 858-7656 or to the local health department where the patient resides. If the patient resides outside New York State, please notify the NYSDOH Regional Epidemiology Program at (518) 473-4439.