

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Alert #21 - *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* - 08/28/2002

Erie County Public Health Laboratory

Please be advised that the New York State Department of Health has issued an alert to local health departments and clinical bacteriology laboratories licensed by the New York State Department of Health that as of August 23, 2002, six (6) culture confirmed cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infections have been identified in New York State. All of these cases have involved consumption of shellfish that were purchased in the New York City/Long Island area. Although several of the investigations continue, preliminary data suggests that the source of the shellfish for two of the cases is Long Island clam beds.

The ability to detect *V. parahaemolyticus* infections depends on proper laboratory methods used during routine culture of stool specimens from patients with community-acquired diarrhea. Clinical bacteriology laboratories licensed by the New York State Department of Health have been advised to enhance their routine methods for *V. parahaemolyticus* culture until the end of October 2002.

Furthermore, we recommend that clinicians specifically request *Vibrio* species when submitting stool specimens to laboratories from patients with diarrheal illness particularly if the patient has a history of having consumed shellfish, lobsters, or crabs.

Food borne illnesses, such as those due to *Vibrio* infections, are reportable diseases in New York State. Physicians are required (Public Health Law 225 section 2.15) to report positive findings for reportable diseases to the county health department where the patient resides.

Please go to the following link for more information:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/vibrioparahaemolyticus_g.htm

Please address any questions regarding the reporting of *V. parahaemolyticus* and other diarrheal diseases to Jack Schwartz at the Erie County Health Department, Bureau of Disease Control (858-7698).