



County of Erie

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COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

HEALTH ADVISORY #255

SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

HEALTH ADVISORY: *VIBRIO PARAHAEMOLYTICUS* INFECTIONS INCREASE

Please distribute to all staff in the Departments of Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine, Infectious Disease, Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Infection Control, and Laboratory Medicine

Summary:

- Since June 1, 2009, there has been an increase in laboratory-confirmed cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in New York State (NYS) and New York City (NYC).
- *Vibrio* species (sp.) infections should be considered in the differential diagnosis of any patient presenting with gastrointestinal illness and a history of consuming seafood. If suspected, providers must specifically request testing for *Vibrio sp.* bacteria.
- Providers should report any suspected or confirmed cases of *Vibrio sp.* infection to the local health department (LHD) where the patient resides.
- Laboratories should submit all positive *Vibrio sp.* isolates to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Wadsworth Center Public Health Laboratory for confirmation and molecular typing.
- Certain patients are at higher risk and should be reminded about the hazards of consuming or handling raw seafood.

Background:

Between June 1 and August 28, 2009, there has been an increase in *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (*Vp*) cases reported to the NYSDOH in comparison to the same time periods in 2007 and 2008. A similar increase in *Vp* has been noted in NYC and other states. Therefore, health care providers are reminded to consider *Vibrio*-related infection when evaluating patients with gastroenteritis.

Since June 1, 2009, 25 cases of *Vp* were reported in 10 counties of NYS, outside of NYC (Dutchess-1, Franklin-1, Monroe-1, Montgomery-1, Nassau-4, Onondaga-1, Saratoga-1, Suffolk-11, Tompkins-1, and Westchester-3) with onsets of illness between 6/1/09 and 8/10/09. Of the reported *Vp* cases, ages range from 8 to 83 years of age, with a median age of 46; 72% are male. Twelve of the 15 cases for which we have exposure information indicate consumption of raw clams.

The diagnosis of *Vibrio sp.* infections should be considered in any patient presenting with gastrointestinal symptoms and a recent history of consumption of raw or undercooked seafood.

Onset of illness may occur within hours to five days after exposure. Most episodes of illness are self-limited and do not require treatment other than oral or intravenous hydration. Elderly and very young patients, pregnant women, and patients with underlying illness such as liver disease, diabetes and those with immune disorders may be at increased risk of sepsis and other complications. **Providers are encouraged to remind such at-risk patients that consumption and improper handling of raw or undercooked seafood can result in serious illness, including death.**

Laboratory Testing:

Since *Vibrio* sp. require selective culture media for isolation, testing for *Vibrio* sp. **MUST** specifically be requested when submitting stool for bacteriologic examination. The medium of choice for isolation is selective thiosulfate citrate bile salts sucrose (TCBS) agar, on which it appears as a distinct opaque green colony. All clinical *Vibrio* sp. isolates from outside NYC should be forwarded for confirmation and molecular typing to the NYSDOH Wadsworth Center Bacteriology Laboratory to the attention of Nellie Dumas at the appropriate address below:

If sent via **overnight courier:**
120 New Scotland Avenue
Albany, New York 12208

If sent through **USPS:**
Empire State Plaza
P.O. Box 509
Albany, New York 12201

Reporting:

Foodborne illnesses, including *Vibrio* sp. infections, are reportable diseases in NYS. Prompt notification to your LHD is imperative to ensure that outbreaks are promptly recognized and control measures are implemented. If you have general questions about *Vibrio*-related infections or would like to report a suspect or confirmed case, please contact the Erie County Department of Health at (716) 858-7697, Monday thru Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm.

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary