



Department of Health

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NEWS UPDATE

Buncombe County - Cases of Salmonella Paratyphi B Increase

The Buncombe County Department of Health reports that 5 more cases of Salmonella Paratyphi B were identified over the weekend, bringing the total to 34, as of Monday, April 30, 2012. The local health department is working with NC Department of Public Health, Center for Disease Control, US Department of Agriculture and others to continue intensive testing, interviewing, and epidemiological investigation of the outbreak in order to squelch the spread of the disease. Cases still appear to have been associated with residence or travel to Buncombe County since February 28, 2012. A single source of infection has not been confirmed.

As much as the public wants to know which foods or restaurants should be avoided, state and local health officials do not have final laboratory test results that would allow conclusive identification of a specific source of salmonella contamination. Gibbie Harris, Health Director states that at this point in the investigation it is better to broadly implement control measures than to speculate or falsely identify a source. Based on the preliminary lab findings Control Measures have been issued to food establishments in Buncombe County by Environmental Health Specialists. Asheville Independent Restaurant Association (AIR) is voluntarily working with the health department to educate food workers and heighten awareness of ways to prevent the spread of disease.

The health department continues to test people who may have been exposed, as well as their family and close contacts. Any reports of possible additional cases are immediately placed under investigation to verify whether the case may be linked to this outbreak. Physicians and hospitals have received information and updates about -

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symptoms, treatment, reporting and control of the outbreak. And information about symptoms, treatment and preventing further spread is available to the public on the website www.buncombecounty.org and the hotline (828.250.5300).

Gibbie Harris reports that the final laboratory characterization of the strain causing this outbreak is expected toward the end of this week, offering additional information to control the spread of the disease.

The public can do a large part in controlling the spread of this disease by washing their hands, especially before preparing food and by seeing a doctor if they have symptoms of Salmonella. The public as well as physicians can report symptoms of this illness by contact Buncombe County Department of Health's Communicable Disease Nurses by calling 828.250.5109.

Symptoms commonly associated with this infection may include – but are not limited to – diarrhea that may be bloody, high fever, headache and abdominal pain usually 1 to 10 days – sometimes longer – after exposure. The illness caused by Salmonella infection usually lasts four to seven days but may last longer with the Paratyphi serotype. In some cases, people may need to be hospitalized. The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness. People who have these symptoms should see a doctor and may be treated with antibiotics.

Recommendations for anyone who has symptoms of Salmonella Paratyphi B infection include:

- See a doctor immediately
- Do not prepare food or drinks for others until a doctor tells you it is safe for you to do so
- Do not go to work or school until you no longer have diarrhea
- If you are a food worker, health care worker or child care worker, do not return to work until released by the Buncombe County Health Director
- Drink plenty of water and juice
- Call your doctor or go the emergency room if you are unable to keep down liquids or have signs of dehydration (dark urine, small amount of urine, or a rapid heart rate)
- Call the Buncombe County Department of Health Disease Control Division at 250-5109 to report possible Salmonella Paratyphi B infection.

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Tips for Preventing Salmonella infection include:

- Good hand washing: wash hands after using the toilet or changing a diaper; and before you fix, serve or eat food.
- Cook all foods fully and as directed to kill germs.
- Keep uncooked meats, poultry and eggs away from fruits and vegetables, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash counters, cutting boards and utensils with soap and water after they have been in contact with raw meat, poultry or eggs.
- Rinse all fruits and vegetables with running water before you eat them.

For updates go to our website: www.buncombecounty.org/health.

To listen to information, call the HOTLINE: 828.250.5300 (English, Spanish and Russian).

To report symptoms of Salmonella paratyphi B, call Communicable Disease Nurses: 828.250.5190.

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