



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

PO BOX 962, 1060 EMELINE AVE., SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061-0962
TELEPHONE: (831) 454-4114 FAX: (831) 454-5049 TDD: (831) 454-4123

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UNIT

HEALTH ADVISORY: Outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* O104:H4 infections in Germany

June 3, 2011

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is monitoring a large outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* O104:H4 (STEC O104:H4) infections ongoing in Germany. As of June 2, 2011, case counts confirmed by Germany's Robert Koch Institute include 520 patients with hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) – a type of kidney failure that is associated with *E. coli* or STEC infections – and 11 deaths. The vehicle of transmission has not been identified.

Many of these illnesses are in persons who report recent travel to Germany, but reside elsewhere. In the United States, three suspected cases of STEC O104:H4 infections have been identified in persons who recently traveled to Hamburg, Germany. No cases have been identified thus far in residents of California.

The Santa Cruz County Health Department is partnering with the California Department of Public Health and the CDC to enhance surveillance for persons returning from Europe who may be ill with STEC O104:H4. We are requesting that California providers ask persons with acute-onset diarrhea and/or HUS if they travelled in Europe in the three weeks preceding their illnesses and to immediately report suspected cases to the Santa Cruz County Health Department at 454-4114 or 471-1180 [after hours phone number].

Guidelines to ensure detection and characterization of STEC infections include the following:

- All patients with Shiga toxin-positive diarrheal illness, *E. coli* O157:H7, non O157 STEC, or HUS should be reported to Santa Cruz County Health Department immediately by phone at 454-4114, regardless of a travel history to Germany (California Code of Regulations Title 17 Section 2500).

- All stools submitted for testing from patients with acute community-acquired diarrhea should be cultured for STEC O157:H7 and simultaneously assayed for Shiga toxins or the genes encoding these toxins (to detect non O157 STEC).
- Clinical laboratories should report and send *E. coli* O157:H7 isolates and Shiga toxin-positive samples to Santa Cruz County Public Health Laboratory as soon as possible for additional characterization.
- Specimens or enrichment broths in which Shiga toxin or STEC are detected, but from which O157:H7 STEC isolates have not been recovered, should be forwarded as soon as possible to Santa Cruz County Public Health Laboratory so that the strain can be isolated.

For questions about specimen collection and transport, please call the Communicable Disease Unit at 454-4114.

For more information about the outbreak please see: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/HAN/han00322.asp>