

Friday 17 January 2014

Rare gastroenteritis cases in Sutherland

NSW Health has been notified of four recent cases of a rare bacterial gastroenteritis, prompting NSW Health to issue an alert, particularly to people who may have purchased food at Kenny's Kebabs at Westfield Miranda in January.

Director of South Eastern Sydney Public Health Unit, Professor Mark Ferson said the four patients with bloody diarrhoea caused by Shiga-toxin producing E. coli (STEC) bacterial infection were reported yesterday in patients from the Sutherland/St George Area.

Patients reported onset of diarrhoea between 6 and 10 January. All were admitted to hospital and are recovering.

The South Eastern Sydney Public Health Unit immediately initiated an epidemiological investigation, conducting detailed interviews with cases about a range of risk factors for infection.

Today investigators identified that the common risk was that all four cases reported eating food from Kenny's Kebabs at Westfield Miranda between 4 and 8 January 2014. No other common risk factors were identified.

NSW Food Authority today attended Kenny's Kebabs to undertake an investigation and identified a number of concerns associated with food handling and preparation. As a result, the inspection of the premises the NSW Food Authority has issued a Prohibition Order which prevents the business from trading until further notice.

Results from samples taken during testing are yet to be finalised.

Professor Ferson said that investigations were continuing in regard to which particular food may have been contaminated at the kebab shop, but it is likely that there will be more cases so it's important to seek medical attention if you have these symptoms.

Professor Ferson said the symptoms of STEC infection include:

- diarrhoea that may have blood in it
- abdominal cramps
- nausea and vomiting.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Media

Media on-call number: 0409 973 612

“Symptoms can last five to 10 days. Symptoms can be severe in children, the elderly and people with reduced immunity,” Professor Ferson said.

STEC infection is sometimes complicated by haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) – a combination of anaemia and kidney failure. Symptoms of HUS may include bruising or a rash of fine red spots, reduced urination and disturbed consciousness. “Other complications can develop following HUS, including long-term kidney damage, high blood pressure and seizures.

People who have bloody diarrhoea or show symptoms of HUS should seek medical advice without delay. Tests on a collected stool sample can determine whether STEC is the cause.

“STEC can be carried by animals such as cattle. People are infected when they come into contact with the faeces of an infected animal or person, either directly or indirectly,” Prof Ferson said.

The most important ways to prevent infection with STEC is to:

- cook hamburgers and sausages thoroughly
- wash hands well after handling raw meat
- use different knives and cutting boards for raw meat preparation and other food preparation
- wash raw vegetables and fruits thoroughly
- wash hands well after touching animals or their faeces

Since 2010 between 10 and 22 cases of STEC have been reported annually in NSW.

For more information visit the NSW Health website for a fact sheet:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Shiga-Toxigenic.aspx>

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