



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

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Commissioner

nyc.gov/health

2006 Alert # 41: *E. coli* O157:H7 associated with Taco Bell

December 12, 2006

Please Distribute to All Clinical Staff in Emergency Medicine, Pediatrics, Primary Care, Infectious Diseases, Family Medicine, Laboratory Medicine, and Infection Control Staff

- DOHMH is working with NYS and CDC to investigate an outbreak of *E. coli* O157 associated with eating at a Taco Bell. There is one confirmed case in a New York City resident and fourteen additional cases are under investigation as of December 12, 2006. The food vehicle for this outbreak is still unknown.
- DOHMH would like to remind healthcare providers that they must **SPECIFICALLY REQUEST testing for Shiga toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC)** in patients being evaluated for bloody diarrhea or hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). The medium of choice for isolation is sorbitol-MacConkey (SMAC) agar. Cultures sent for culture and sensitivity without a specific request for *E. coli* O157 testing are NOT tested for *E. coli* O157.
- DOHMH is requesting that Emergency Departments and other providers test patients with diarrhea or bloody diarrhea and a history of having eaten at Taco Bell in the 10 days prior to symptom onset for *E. coli* O157 even if it is not their routine policy to test patients with diarrheal illness.
- Immediately report all suspected and confirmed cases of STEC infection or HUS to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).
- Send suspect and culture confirmed STEC (including *E. coli* O157:H7) isolates to the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) for confirmation, serotyping, and pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE).

All laboratory positive STEC cases and any suspected cases of HUS should be reported immediately, to help us identify outbreak-associated cases. Please contact us as follows:

During business hours: Bureau of Communicable Disease at (212) 788-9830.

After hours: Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222.

As always, we appreciate your continued assistance in addressing emerging disease issues. Additional information can be found in 2006 Alert #40 sent December 5th, available on the web at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/06md40.pdf>

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