

NEWS RELEASE

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5 Confirmed Cases in Marin E. coli Outbreak

No single source of the infection has been identified

San Rafael, CA – Five confirmed and one presumptive case of the food-borne E. coli O157 infection have been recorded by Marin County health officials since Sept. 22, and four of the patients are children.

Of four patients hospitalized, two have been discharged; two other patients were not hospitalized. All six patients are stable and recovering, said Marin County Public Health Officer Dr. Matt Willis.

The patients are residents of Tiburon, San Anselmo, Inverness and San Rafael.

Marin County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Environmental Health Services are working with the California Department of Public Health to gather information from clinicians, patients and food vendors to determine whether the cases might share a common source or be linked to cases outside of Marin.

The ongoing investigation has not identified any single food source of the infections. Environmental Health inspections of establishments where food may have been purchased or consumed by cases has not revealed any contaminated products or evidence for ongoing risk to the public.

The Public Health Laboratory is performing DNA fingerprinting on the bacteria, which will help determine which people were infected with the same strain. Willis said the fingerprinting is a new technique that will help narrow the focus in finding potential links between cases.

E. coli infection usually occurs by eating foods containing the bacteria, and the people most at risk for serious illness are children and older adults or others living with weakened immune systems. Marin averages about five cases of E coli O157 each year.

Residents are reminded to follow good food hygiene practices, including washing hands with soap and water after changing diapers, using the bathroom and before preparing food or eating. Safe food-handling includes cooking meats thoroughly and washing hands, counters, cutting

boards and utensils after touching raw meat. Anyone experiencing symptoms of E. coli infection, which can include abdominal cramps and diarrhea (sometimes bloody), should visit a doctor.

Marin County Health and Human Services will continue to provide public health updates to residents and healthcare providers as the investigation unfolds. Information will be posted on www.marinhhs.org.

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