



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants

Date: January 10, 2024

From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory: Suspected Foodborne Illness linked to Seafood

Key Messages

- San Diego County Epidemiology Unit is investigating foodborne illness complaints from patrons of seafood dining establishments.
- Healthcare providers should report cases of acute gastroenteritis with a common exposure (e.g. dining establishment, shellfish consumption, etc.), to the County Epidemiology Unit by faxing a Confidential Morbidity Report, or calling 619-692-8499 (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM).

Situation

San Diego County Epidemiology Unit is currently investigating foodborne illness complaints related to dining establishments that serve seafood. While no specific source has been identified yet, potential sources include raw seafood, such as oysters.

Background

Raw shellfish consumption is a risk factor for transmitting a variety of pathogens, most commonly [norovirus](#) and [Vibrio species](#).

Norovirus is the most common cause of foodborne illness in the United States. Transmission occurs via the fecal-oral route, typically from contaminated fomites or food. Symptoms of norovirus usually begin 12 to 48 hours after exposure and can include vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal cramping. Rates of severe outcomes, such as hospitalization and death, are generally low, but are highest in children less than 5 years old and older adults aged 65 years and older.

Vibrio species are bacteria naturally found in salty or brackish water. Vibriosis typically presents 12-24 hours after exposure with diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping, and fever. Risk factors for vibriosis include consumption of raw or undercooked shellfish, particularly oysters, or exposure of skin wounds to contaminated seawater. Immunosuppressed patients are at risk of severe systemic disease.

Actions Requested

- **Consider** norovirus and vibriosis in the differential diagnosis of acute gastrointestinal disease, especially among patients with a history of recent seafood consumption and consider testing when appropriate.
- **Report** cases of acute gastroenteritis with a common exposure (e.g., dining establishment, shellfish consumption), to the County Epidemiology Unit by faxing a Confidential Morbidity Report or calling 619-692-8499 (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM).

Resources

[Vital Signs: Foodborne Norovirus Outbreaks — United States, 2009–2012 \(cdc.gov\)](#)
[Information for Health Professionals & Laboratorians | Vibrio Illness \(Vibriosis\) | CDC](#)

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

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