

***Clostridium perfringens* Intoxications Associated with a Restaurant**

March

Washington County

On March 26, 2012, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) foodborne illness hotline received a complaint of gastrointestinal illness among a group of seven individuals from two households who ate at a restaurant in Woodbury on March 24. The group reported no other recent meals in common. Washington County Public Health and Environment (WCPHE) was contacted and an investigation was initiated immediately.

WCPHE sanitarians visited the restaurant on March 26 to evaluate food preparation and handling procedures and collect credit card receipts for additional patrons who had dined there from March 23 - 25. MDH staff interviewed patrons identified from credit card receipts about food consumption and illness history. A case was defined as a restaurant patron who developed vomiting or diarrhea (≥ 3 loose stools in a 24-hour period) after eating at the restaurant. Stool samples collected from consenting restaurant patrons were submitted to the MDH Public Health Laboratory for bacterial and viral testing.

Thirty-nine restaurant patrons were interviewed; seven (18%) met the case definition (three from the original complainant group and four identified through credit card receipts). All seven cases reported eating at the restaurant on March 24. The median incubation period for the cases was 7 hours (range, 3 to 16.5 hours). The median duration of illness was 16 hours (range, 9 to 21 hours). All seven cases reported diarrhea, six (86%) reported cramps, and none reported vomiting, fever, or bloody stools. A stool specimen submitted by one ill patron tested positive for *Clostridium perfringens* enterotoxin type A.

No food items were significantly associated with illness. The majority of cases reported consuming chips (n=7), salsa (n=6), chicken (n=6), rice (n=5), and beans (n=4).

WCPHE sanitarians conducted an environmental assessment at the restaurant on March 26. The sanitarians identified several issues regarding cooling of food. Beans and ground beef were being cooled improperly. Additionally, the restaurant had no functioning thermometer and was not keeping cooling logs. Restaurant employees were educated on safe cooling procedures.

This was a foodborne outbreak of *Clostridium perfringens* intoxications associated with a restaurant in Woodbury. While no vehicle was implicated, the environmental health assessment documented time-temperature abuse of multiple food items.