

Food Poisoning or Something Else? Investigators Probe Cake Illnesses

Forty people have been sickened by cake sold at 10 local markets with unusual symptoms such as hallucinations.

By Paige Austin (Patch Staff) January 9, 2015 at 6:39pm

Health care Authorities are investigating the source of a Three Kings Day Cake that made nearly 40 people sick with unusual symptoms including hallucinations.

Made by Cholula's Bakery in Santa Ana, the fruit cake was delivered to 10 stores including two in San Juan Capistrano and one Long Beach.

Orange County Health Care Agency Spokeswoman Nicole Stanfield confirmed to Patch that the agency is testing the cake to determine what substance sickened so many people. Until the results come back next week, the agency will not rule out the possibility that the cake was laced or that a chemical was leached into it, she confirmed.

The symptoms reported by those who ate the cake - shortness of breath, hallucinations, dizziness - are atypical of food poisoning, which typically focuses its fury on the gut.

"Assuming the ingredients were really wheat, salt, eggs, that sort of stuff, hallucinations would not be common. If you put LSD into something, you might see some of these symptoms," Dr. Carl Schultz, a professor of emergency medicine at UC Irvine told The Orange County Register on Friday.

According to the health care agency's website, Cholula's Bakery has a long history of problems including 32 citations over two years for everything from cockroaches and vermin to lack of handwashing supplies for employees.

The Orange County Health Care Agency closed the bakery on Wednesday and suspended its permit, citing cockroach infestation.

The "Rosca de Reyes" was delivered Monday and Tuesday, and retailers and consumers were told to throw out any Rosca de Reyes from Cholula's.

Wednesday night, Santa Ana police started getting word of multiple patients with stomach aches from Western Medical Center in Anaheim and St. Joseph Hospital in Orange.

"The common denominator is they ate Rosca de Reyes," Santa Ana police Cpl. Anthony Bertagna said.

Most of the calls came from St. Joseph's, and investigators later found four victims at Western Medical Center, Bertagna said.

The Orange County Fire Authority was notified when a family of four fell ill about 10:30 p.m., OCFA Capt. Steve Concialdi said.

A man in his mid 40s, a teenager daughter and son, and a 4-year-old boy reported feeling nauseated and anxious as if they were under the influence of a drug, he said, adding that all four were taken to Western Medical Center in Anaheim.

The "Rosca de Reyes" was sold at Cholula's Bakery and the following market:

-- El Nopal Mercado, 31451 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano;

- La Bodega Ranch, 918 N. Glassell St., Orange;
- La Bodega Ranch, 1700 N. Placentia Ave., Fullerton;
- Santa Ana Marquet, 1216 W. 1st St., Santa Ana;
- Tony's Liquor, 32141 Alipaz St., San Juan Capistrano;
- Gonzalez Marquet, 235 W. La Jolla St., Placentia;
- Taqueria Mocoquito Restaurant, 1076 N. State College Blvd., Anaheim;
- Taco Boy, 725 N. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim;
- Brianna's Ice Cream, 2107 E. Ball Road, Anaheim;
- La Bodega Ranch Market, 4945 Long Beach Blvd., Long Beach.

- City News Service contributed to this report.

SOURCE: <http://patch.com/california/missionviejo/food-poisoning-or-something-else-investigators-probe-cake-illnesses>