

Suspected Bacterial Intoxications Associated with a Restaurant

July

Hennepin County

On July 28, 2017, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) foodborne and waterborne illness hotline received a complaint of gastrointestinal (GI) illness among a group of four who ate at a restaurant in Minneapolis on July 25. The Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health (HCPH) Epidemiology Unit and Minneapolis Health Department (MHD) Environmental Health Unit were notified and an investigation was initiated.

MDH staff interviewed three patrons representing three separate households from the original complainant group. HCPH Epidemiology staff interviewed additional restaurant patrons identified from the July 25 reservation list. A case was defined as a restaurant patron who developed vomiting and/or diarrhea (≥ 3 loose stools in a 24-hour period) after eating food from the restaurant.

MHD sanitarians visited the restaurant on July 28 to evaluate food preparation and handling procedures, look at temperature controls for foods, interview food workers about illness history and work duties, and gather additional patron contact information for July 25.

Twenty-three patrons were interviewed. Four patrons (three from the original complaint; one identified from the reservation list) (17%) met the case definition. Two cases (50%) were female. One case was 70 years of age; the other 3 cases did not report their ages. All cases reported diarrhea and cramps. One case (25%) reported fever. No cases reported vomiting or bloody stools. The median incubation period was 19.5 hours (range, 12.5 to 25 hours). The median illness duration was 22 hours (range, 9 to 26 hours) for three of the cases; one case was still experiencing symptoms at the time of interview. No cases agreed to submit a stool specimen to the MDH Public Health Laboratory for bacterial and viral testing.

Cases reported eating a wide variety of foods including a burrata appetizer (balsamic fig jam, prosciutto, arugula, and ciabatta), fried goat cheese appetizer, shrimp salad on toast, apple and brie salad, walleye dinner, steak sandwich, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, angel food cake, bread pudding, chocolate cake, ice water, orange juice, and soda.

Nineteen controls were interviewed and also reported eating a wide variety of food. No food item was significantly associated with illness.

MHD health inspectors visited the restaurant on July 28 to conduct environmental assessments. Inspectors looked at food processes for the foods eaten by cases. No issues with cooling or hot holding of foods were identified. Inspectors emphasized various food safety practices and discussed temperature controls for foods with restaurant staff.

This was a foodborne outbreak associated with a restaurant in Minneapolis. The etiology was not identified, but the distribution of incubations, symptoms, and illness durations were characteristic of bacterial intoxications caused by *Clostridium perfringens* or the diarrheal form of *Bacillus cereus*. The vehicle of transmission was not identified.