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Following shigellosis outbreak, Souplantation sanitizes and reopens

At least eight diners affected by infectious disease

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Following a thorough scrub down, Souplantation in the Camarillo Town Center reopened this week.

The restaurant voluntarily closed last week after health officials identified it as the source of a localized shigellosis outbreak.

At least eight diners fell ill with the infectious disease, according to Ventura County Public Health officials, who learned about the outbreak on June 22.

That same day, officials at Souplantation's corporate offices in San Diego ordered the restaurant closed to prevent additional infections, the agency said.

Caused by a group of bacteria called shigella, the highly contagious disease usually causes diarrhea and fever, health officials said in a news release.

"We're tracking these cases closely and are working closely with Ventura County Environmental Health, which has completed two inspections of the restaurant in the past two days," county public health officer Dr. Robert Levin said in the June 23 news release.

Souplantation's chief operating officer arrived at the Camarillo location on Thursday, joined by a vice president and the company's quality assurance manager, according to the news release.

Workers cleaned and sanitized surfaces and tossed out all food. All of the restaurant's 40 or so employees received a refresher course in sanitary procedures. The employees were to be tested for shigellosis before being allowed to return to work, the news release said.

On Monday, workers were delivering fresh vegetables to the restaurant. A few groups of people arriving for lunch were greeted by a sign on the front door notifying patrons of the closure. A manager said the restaurant would reopen at 11 a.m. June 27.

Health officials were working to identify where the outbreak originated in the restaurant. Officials do not believe the rash of illnesses was linked to contaminated food, but the investigation was ongoing, officials said June 23.

Levin praised Souplantation for its quick response to the outbreak.

"Souplantation's actions have been exemplary," he said. "This is the kind of swift and decisive action which leads to a collaboration with Public Health that results in a rapid resolution of the problem."

An email to Souplantation's corporate office seeking comment was not returned.

Shigellosis usually resolves itself within five to seven days. Some infected people may develop no symptoms at all but may still pass the shigella bacteria to others. The spread of the disease can be stopped by washing hands frequently and carefully, health officials said.

In March 2007, an outbreak of E. coli was linked to a Souplantation restaurant in Lake Forest, resulting in a voluntary shutdown.

About five months later, in August 2007, a Souplantation in Pasadena voluntarily closed down after about 30 diners contracted shigellosis. All the patients recovered, according to news reports.

SOURCE: <https://www.thecamarilloacorn.com/articles/following-shigellosis-outbreak-souplantation-sanitizes-and-reopens/>