

Gastrointestinal illness outbreak associated with Chinese Taste Restaurant in Issaquah

AT-A-GLANCE

- **Cases:** 5
- **Hospitalizations:** 0
- **Deaths:** 0
- **Status:** Investigation is ongoing
- **Locations:** Chinese Taste Restaurant, 525 NW Locust St, Issaquah, WA 98027
- **Meal dates:** January 29, 2022
- **Prior food safety inspections and current rating?**
 - [NEEDS TO IMPROVE](#)

Highlights

Updated February 8, 2022

Summary

Public Health is investigating an outbreak of gastroenteritis with vomiting and diarrhea associated with Chinese Taste restaurant in Issaquah.

Illnesses

Since February 1, 2022, 5 people from 1 meal party reported becoming ill after consuming food delivered from Chinese Taste restaurant on January 29, 2022.

Symptoms and timing of illness onsets are suggestive of a bacterial toxin, such as *Bacillus cereus* or *Clostridium perfringens*.

The exact food or drink that caused the illnesses has not been identified, though this is not uncommon for outbreaks associated with a bacterial toxin.

Public Health actions

Environmental Health investigators visited the restaurant on February 4, 2022. Investigators identified potential risk factors for bacterial toxin growth and other foodborne germs, including inadequate handwashing facilities, inadequate use of gloves or utensils to prevent bare hand contact with ready to eat foods, lack of temperature controls, inadequate cooling procedures, use of an unapproved food preparation area, and risk of cross contamination between foods.

Based on unsafe food handling practices identified during the investigation, Public Health suspended the restaurant's operating permit on February 4, 2022. Environmental Health investigators provided restaurant management with required conditions for reinstating the permit and required food safety training for restaurant

staff. Environmental Health investigators will reinspect the restaurant within 2 weeks to ensure adoption of safe food handling practices before allowing the restaurant to reopen.

Laboratory testing

We do not have laboratory testing for the people who got sick. Bacterial toxin illnesses are typically short-lived and by the time people seek care, if they do at all, it is often too long after the suspected exposure to test.

About *Bacillus cereus* or *Clostridium perfringens*

- *Bacillus cereus* and *Clostridium perfringens* are both bacteria that grow rapidly at room temperature. These bacteria are found in a variety of foods, including meats, rice, leftovers, sauces, soups, and other prepared foods, particularly those that have sat out too long at room temperature.
- Both bacteria are commonly found in the environment. Contaminated foods could be stored outside of safe temperature ranges at some point prior to arrival at the restaurant, possibly allowing for enough growth of the bacteria or their spores, which then can't be completely removed by proper refrigeration and cooking.

Prevention

General advice for reducing risk of contracting *Bacillus cereus* or *Clostridium perfringens*:

- Wash hands, cutting boards, and counters used for food preparation immediately after use to avoid cross-contamination of other foods.
- Food, especially meats, rice, and gravies should be cooked to a safe internal temperature, and then kept at 140°F (60°C) or warmer, or 40°F (4.4°C) or cooler.
- Leftover foods should be refrigerated as soon as possible and within 2 hours of preparation.
- Put hot foods directly into the refrigerator. However, to allow rapid cooling, large amounts of food, such as soups, stews, and big cuts of meats, such as roasts, should be divided into small quantities for refrigeration.
- Leftovers should be reheated to at least 165°F (74°C) before serving.
- Use a food thermometer to appropriately measure food temperatures, both during cooking and cooling.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.** Foods that have dangerous bacteria in them may not taste, smell, or look different. Any food that has been left out too long may be dangerous to eat, even if it looks OK.