



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants

Date: January 12, 2024

From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory Update #2: Outbreak of Norovirus Disease linked to Consumption of Raw Oysters

Key Messages

- San Diego County Epidemiology Unit is investigating an outbreak of norovirus illness linked to consumption of raw oysters harvested in Sonora, Mexico.
- Please advise patients at risk for severe outcomes to avoid consuming raw oysters, in general, but especially imported from Bahia Salina, Sonora, Mexico.
- Consider testing for [other pathogens commonly linked to raw oyster consumption](#) (e.g., *Vibrio* spp.) in persons reporting oyster exposure but having more severe symptoms.

Situation

As of today, January 12, 2024, 41 confirmed or probable norovirus cases have been epidemiologically linked to the consumption of raw oysters harvested from a specific site in Bahia Salina, Sonora, Mexico. The common source indicates the oysters were contaminated with norovirus before they were sold at the restaurants and wholesale food locations in San Diego. Exposure dates range from December 21, 2023, to January 4, 2024, with illness onsets ranging from December 23, 2023, to January 6, 2024. In addition, four secondary cases among household contacts of known cases have been also identified.

Background

Norovirus is the most common cause of foodborne illness in the United States and is commonly implicated in outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness [linked to raw oyster consumption](#). Transmission occurs via the fecal-oral route, typically from contaminated food or fomites. Symptoms of norovirus usually begin 12 to 48 hours after exposure and can include vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal cramping. Rates of severe outcomes, such as hospitalization and death, are generally low, but are highest in children less than 5 years old and older adults aged 65 years and older.

Actions Requested

- **Counsel** patients at risk for severe outcomes to avoid consuming raw oysters in general but especially imported from Bahia Salina, Sonora, Mexico.
- **Advise** persons with symptoms consistent with norovirus infection to take [preventive measures](#), including performing hand hygiene, disinfecting contaminated surfaces, and avoiding food preparation for others, in order to avoid secondary transmission.
- **Consider** testing for [other pathogens commonly linked to raw oyster consumption](#) (e.g., *Vibrio* spp.) in persons reporting oyster exposure but having more severe symptoms.
- **Report** cases of gastrointestinal illness (even in the absence of laboratory testing) when a cluster is detected (two or more cases or suspected cases of foodborne disease from separate households are suspected to have the

same source of illness) to the County Epidemiology Unit by faxing a Confidential Morbidity Report, or calling 619-692-8499 (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM).

- Other patients can be encouraged to report the exposure to the County through the [Department of Environmental Health and Quality \(DEHQ\)](#), when they have concerns about foodborne illness related to a retail or wholesale food source.

Resources

Federal

[Norovirus Illness: Key Facts | CDC](#)

[Norovirus Outbreaks | CDC](#)

[Oysters and Vibriosis | CDC](#)

State

[Seafood And Shellfish Safety \(ca.gov\)](#)

Local

[Norovirus \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](#)

[CAHAN San Diego Health Advisory: Suspected Foodborne Illness linked to Seafood](#)

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency

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