



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT IDENTIFIES BACTERIA AS A SOURCE OF ILLNESS AT OUTDOOR FOOD FESTIVAL

The bacteria that has sickened some residents who attended the outdoor food festival at the Kensico Dam in Valhalla on June 6 has been identified as *Campylobacter*. The bacteria was identified through tests done on samples from several people who became ill after attending the event.

For most, symptoms will resolve on their own without medication within three to five days, although some people can take 10 days to recover. In rare cases where a person's immune system is weakened by other illnesses or medication, or where illness is particularly severe, antibiotics may be prescribed. *Campylobacter* can cause diarrhea, vomiting and fever.

"Anyone who has not already become sick following this event should no longer be at risk," said Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD. "Anyone who continues to have symptoms should contact his or her physician and should not go to work or school until symptoms resolve."

Due to the fact that at the June 6 event, most attendees ate food from many of the 30 food vendors, it may not be possible to identify the exact source of the bacteria at the Burger and Beer Bash at the Kensico Dam. However, the health department is actively investigating and interviewing people who attended in an effort to identify the food or foods that may have been the source.

Most cases of campylobacteriosis are associated with eating raw or undercooked poultry meat or from cross-contamination of other foods by these items and occur two to five days after consuming the contaminated food. Cross-contamination can occur when the same knife or cutting board used to cut raw poultry is then used to prepare fruits, vegetables or any other food.

The health department issues more than 500 temporary food service permits each year. This is the first time in recent memory that a food outbreak occurred following a temporary event.

"As part of our response, the health department will send sanitarians to each of the food service establishments who participated in the festival to provide a refresher to restaurant staff about food safety, with special emphasis on safe off-site practices," Amler said. "Sanitarians will also conduct a detailed food preparation review by observing as restaurant staffers prepare the foods they served at the June 6 event."