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Salmonella Saintpaul Outbreak in Southeast Michigan Involving Sprouts

LANSING, MI - The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) is issuing a public health alert regarding illness from *Salmonella* infections among people who have reported raw alfalfa sprouts consumption in southeast Michigan. At this time, MDCH is recommending that *people avoid consumption of raw alfalfa sprouts* until we have further information about the origin of the contaminated sprouts.

Michigan currently has 16 confirmed *Salmonella* Saintpaul cases from six jurisdictions in southeast Michigan (Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties; City of Detroit). The illness onset dates range from Mar 23 to April 6, 2009. There have been two known hospitalizations. Ten of the 16 people reported consumption of raw alfalfa sprouts at sandwich shops in southeast Michigan.

MDCH is working closely with local health departments, the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to determine the source of the outbreak. The Michigan cases are presenting the same genetic fingerprint as uncovered in the Midwest earlier this year, which resulted in a recall of alfalfa sprouts.

“Anyone who eats raw sprouts may be at risk for exposure to *Salmonella* or *E. coli* O157:H7 bacteria,” said Dr. Gregory Holzman, chief medical executive for MDCH. “We want to alert people to the risk of illness with the consumption of raw sprouts.”

Sprouts are the germinating form of seeds and beans and are frequently eaten raw in sandwiches and salads. Past sprout-related outbreaks of foodborne illness have been linked to seeds contaminated by animal manure in the field, during storage, or as a result of poor hygienic practices in the production of sprouts. In addition, the warm and humid conditions required to grow sprouts are ideal for the rapid growth of bacteria.

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Salmonellosis is an infection with bacteria called *Salmonella*. Most persons infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without treatment. The elderly, infants, and those with weak immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness. Anyone who has recently eaten raw alfalfa sprouts and is experiencing symptoms should contact their healthcare provider and their local health department.

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