



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10-26-11

MEDIA CONTACT: Leslie Kinnee

989-831-3669, lkinnee@mmdhd.org

Mid-Michigan District Health Department

615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702, www.mmdhd.org

E. coli outbreak in Gratiot County

Stanton- The Mid- Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) has been notified of three cases of E. coli in Gratiot County.

Two young children from the Maple Rapids area have developed Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome as a result of E. coli infections. Both children have been hospitalized. A third person, also from the Maple Rapids area, has not developed Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome, but is recovering from the E. coli infection. Mid-Michigan District Health Department wishes them all a speedy recovery.

E. coli is a bacterium that is normally found in the gut of animals such as cattle, sheep, pigs, and deer. E. coli is spread by the oral-fecal route, undercooked ground beef, unpasteurized milk and apple cider, dirty water, ground water, pets with diarrhea, and from people infected with E. coli.

E. coli can enter the human food chain in multiple ways. It is sometimes inadvertently mixed in with meat during the butchering process and can contaminate cow's milk. E. coli can also be spread from person to person by the oral-fecal route.

When E. coli is ingested it can cause nausea, low-grade fever, loss of appetite, vomiting, abdominal bloating, diarrhea, and bloody diarrhea. One week following the onset of diarrhea, the kidneys can start to malfunction. When this happens, chemicals that are normally excreted in the urine start to build up in dangerous amounts. There is also a drop in the red blood cells causing anemia.

Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome sometimes develops as a result of an E. coli infection and is characterized by kidney damage and loss of blood. When Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome develops, the person must start kidney dialysis and recovery is often slow. Fatality in these cases can run as high as five percent.

The three cases of E. coli in Gratiot County have public health officials at MMDHD concerned.

Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department says, "This strain of E. coli is very potent and troublesome. We urge everyone to take precautions to prevent becoming infected by this germ."

Dr. Graham recommends the following precautions:

- Cook all meats, especially ground meat, to a temperature of 155 degrees for ten seconds or until the juice from the meat is clear.
- Don't drink unpasteurized milk or cider.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Wash your hands before fixing food, before eating and after going to the bathroom, and after changing diapers.
- Seek medical attention if you are a close contact of someone with an E. coli infection and you develop diarrhea.
- Seek medical attention for diarrhea that lasts more than 48 hours or if excreting less urine than normal.

For additional information on E. coli infections, please visit www.cdc.gov.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

###