



# Epi Watch

A Monthly Epidemiology Newsletter



Division of Disease Control  
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To report diseases or request  
information call:

(Mon-Fri, 8-5, Area code 727):

Epidemiology	824-6932
Hepatitis	824-6932
HIV/AIDS	824-6964
Immunizations	824-6936
STD	824-6911
Tuberculosis	824-6953
<b>Non-business hours</b>	<b>824-6900</b>

**Epi Watch** is a monthly newsletter produced and distributed by the Pinellas County Health Department Epidemiology Program.

## ***Escherichia coli* O157:H7**

Maria N. Donnelly, MSPH

The Florida Department of Health is currently investigating an outbreak of diarrheal illness caused by *E. coli* O157:H7 and associated with attendance at the Florida State Fair in Tampa (February 9-20), Plant City Strawberry Festival (March 3-24) and the Central Florida Fair in Orlando (March 3-24). To date, 26 confirmed cases (individuals with diarrhea of variable severity who tested positive for *E. coli* O157:H7 and/or were diagnosed with hemolytic uremic syndrome [HUS]) have been reported statewide. There are 40 suspect cases (individuals with diarrhea of variable severity who had recently attended Florida fairs or festivals). Currently, 14 cases (confirmed or suspected) are hospitalized and no deaths have been associated with this outbreak. Most cases have been reported from Central Florida and Pinellas County has investigated four suspect cases. The Florida Department of Health investigation is ongoing and includes collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

*E. coli* O157:H7 is a shiga toxin-producing bacterium that is shed in feces. Transmission occurs through the fecal-oral route. Outbreaks have been associated with the consumption of undercooked beef, unwashed fruits and vegetables, unpasteurized milk and juice, and swimming or drinking contaminated water. While the investigation is still underway to determine the source of infection, it may be associated with visiting the petting zoos at recent Florida fairs and festivals; individuals may have become infected by coming into contact with infected animals' feces while petting an animal or by touching contaminated surfaces. Once infected, it can take from 2 to 10 days for the characteristic symptoms of diarrhea, sometimes bloody, and abdominal pain to develop. Most individuals recover within 10 days without sequelae, however high risk groups, such as those under five years of age and the elderly, may have severe complications from infection, such as HUS, which is characterized by kidney failure. HUS occurs in 8% of those who are infected, some of whom have lifelong complications such as abnormal kidney function, high blood pressure or paralysis.

One of the most effective means of preventing infection is by practicing good hand hygiene. In addition, beef should be cooked to a temperature above 160° F, cross contamination during food preparation avoided, all fruits and vegetables thoroughly washed before eating, and juices and milk pasteurized. Individuals with diarrheal illness should not swim in public lakes, pools, share baths with others, or prepare food. Parents should consider changing their children's clothes and shoes after a visit to areas where contact with animal feces might have occurred.

Individuals with diarrhea of variable severity who have recently attended a Florida fair or festival should contact their health care provider and/or the Pinellas County Health Department. Health care providers can assist by identifying suspected or confirmed *E. coli* O157:H7 and/or HUS cases and reporting these to the Health Department promptly for confirmation and investigation. Please alert staff, particularly those who receive patient phone calls, that anyone with diarrhea, who recently attended fairs or festivals, should be evaluated. A stool culture should be included in the work-up. The assistance and diligence of community partners in providing this vital public health information will allow for the continued protection and promotion of the health of all citizens.

Further information can be found on the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and the FL-DOH website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us>. Please do not hesitate to contact the Pinellas County Health Department Disease Control Division at 727-824-6900 with any possible cases,

questions, or concerns.

*"The reason for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on a disease is to control that disease. Collection and analysis should not be allowed to consume resources if action does not follow." Foege, W.H. et al. (1976). Int. J of Epidemiology, 5:29-37.*

NA = Not Available

**Selected Reportable Diseases in Pinellas County**

Disease	2005 March	2005 Year-to-Date	2004 Year-to-Date	2004 Total
AIDS	22	57	56	212
Animal Bite, PEP Recommended	3	13	12	59
Animal Rabies		1	4	4
Arboviral Illness (Human):				
Dengue				
Eastern Equine Encephalitis				
St. Louis Encephalitis				
West Nile Virus				
California/LaCrosse				1
Anthrax				
Botulism				
Campylobacteriosis	2	10	11	46
Chlamydia	145	382	472	2,312
Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD)	1	1		2
Cryptosporidiosis			2	7
Cyclosporiasis				1
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7				2
Giardiasis	2	4	3	28
Gonorrhea	66	207	264	1,305
<i>H. influenzae</i> :				
Meningitis				
Pneumonia	1	1		1
Primary bacteremia	1	2		5
Epiglottitis			1	1
Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS)	1	1		
Hepatitis, Acute Viral:				
A		4	7	12
B	3	9	8	48
C	2	3	6	14
Non-A, Non-B		1	2	5
Hepatitis B: Pregnant woman +HBsAg	4	12	8	26
HIV	38	89	71	240
Legionellosis	2	2	3	16
Listeriosis		1		
Lyme Disease		3	2	4
Malaria			1	4
Meningitis:				
Group B Strep				1
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>				
<i>S. pneumoniae</i>		2	1	1
Other bacterial			1	2
Meningococcal Disease		2	3	4
Mercury Poisoning			1	1
Mumps		1		
Pertussis	1	4	4	15
Plague (Bubonic & Pneumonic)				
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	1	1		
Salmonellosis	11	23	19	170
Shigellosis	3	11	5	19
Smallpox				
<i>Streptococcal</i> Disease, Inv. Group A		3	2	8
<i>S. pneumoniae</i> , Inv. Disease (DR)	4	10	11	22
<i>S. pneumoniae</i> , Inv. Disease (NDR)		13	7	21
Syphilis: Total	14	21	21	126
Infectious (P and S)	6	11	9	49
Early Latent	5	6	7	39
Late Syphilis(Late Latent; Neurosyphilis)	3	4	4	38
Congenital				
Tuberculosis	1	2	10	35
<i>Vibrio</i> infections				10

Provisional cases reported by the Pinellas County Health Department. Blank cells indicate no cases reported.

For a complete list of reportable diseases and guidelines for reporting please visit:

[http://www.myflorida.com/disease\\_ctrl/epi/surv/lor8\\_4.pdf](http://www.myflorida.com/disease_ctrl/epi/surv/lor8_4.pdf)

