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State and local officials issue joint statement regarding investigation of cyclosporiasis cases in Southwest Michigan

LANSING, Mich. – State and local health officials are investigating reports of multiple cases of cyclosporiasis in Southwest Michigan.

Cyclosporiasis is a gastrointestinal illness caused by a microscopic parasite. People can become infected by consuming contaminated food or water. Outbreaks in the United States have been linked to contaminated fresh produce.

Illness typically results in watery diarrhea, and can include loss of appetite, weight loss, stomach cramps, bloating, nausea and fatigue. Symptoms generally appear 1-2 weeks after ingestion of the contaminated product. If untreated, symptoms often last for weeks and can return one or more times. Infection is not transmitted directly from person to person and usually is not life-threatening.

There have been eight lab-confirmed cyclosporiasis cases with illness onset dates since late June. At least 14 other individuals are also being investigated as possible cases associated with this cluster. People affected have been reporting dining in Southwest Michigan since mid-June 2019.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and Van Buren/Cass District Health Department are working together to investigate these illnesses. Interviews with all people with confirmed symptoms are ongoing to determine if there are commonalities in where they dined and what food they may have consumed.

Preliminary information suggests an exposure to food products prepared at or distributed by Taste restaurant in South Haven. There is no indication that the illnesses are related to poor food handling or preparation at this establishment. Taste restaurant is fully cooperating with the investigation.

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Additional establishments may be identified as this investigation continues. Public health agencies are also closely monitoring an increase in cases of cyclosporiasis statewide and nationally that are unrelated to the investigation in the South Haven area.

"Cyclospora contamination often occurs prior to the food arriving at food distribution centers and restaurants," said Tim Slawinski, MDARD's Food and Dairy Division director. "This type of contamination is not easily removed by standard produce rinsing."

State and local investigators are reviewing food histories and invoices from suppliers to the restaurant to identify specific food products that may have caused the illnesses and determine the extent to which those products may have been distributed in Michigan.

"We are working diligently with the restaurant, MDARD, and our local health department colleagues to investigate these cases," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy director for health at MDHHS. "We are asking that anyone who has symptoms like watery diarrhea and stomach cramps and recently ate at the restaurant contact their doctor because this illness can be effectively treated with antibiotics."

Medical care providers should promptly report cases so MDHHS or local health departments can investigate potential sources of infections.

More information about cyclosporiasis is available through the CDC at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/index.html>.

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