

The following message was sent to you through the Alaska Public Health Alert Network (AK PHAN), a joint message from the Alaska Division of Public Health and the Department of Environmental Conservation. Please share this information with others who may be interested.

Note: Contact information for the Alaska Section of Epidemiology can be found at the end of this message.

Health Advisory

February 15, 2013

***Campylobacter* Outbreak Associated with Consumption of Raw Milk**

Kenai Peninsula, January – February 2013

The purpose of this Health Advisory is to inform you of a recent and potentially ongoing outbreak of *Campylobacter* infections that have been associated with consuming raw milk.

What is the outbreak?

Campylobacter infection is reportable by state regulations to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' Section of Epidemiology (SOE). Since late January, 2013, four people with confirmed *Campylobacter* infection and at least one person with probable infection reported consuming raw (unpasteurized) milk in the few days preceding illness. One infant with close contact to a confirmed case-patient is also suspected of having *Campylobacter* infection. All six reside on the Kenai Peninsula. The *Campylobacter* isolated from the four lab-confirmed cases are a match by molecular techniques (pulsed-field gel electrophoresis, or PFGE). This strain of *Campylobacter* has not been previously identified in Alaska.

What is *Campylobacter* and how do people become infected?

Campylobacter are bacteria that can cause diarrhea (sometimes bloody), abdominal cramping/pain, nausea, vomiting, and fever within 2 to 5 days after exposure. The illness typically lasts from several days to over a week, with variable severity. Some people, especially young children or individuals with compromised immune systems, can develop severe or even life-threatening illness. Infrequently, *Campylobacter* infection leads to long-term consequences. Some people with *Campylobacter* infection develop arthritis, and rarely, some develop a life-threatening disease called Guillain-Barré syndrome that inflames the nerves of the body beginning several weeks after the onset of diarrhea.

Outbreaks of *Campylobacter* are often associated with consumption of unpasteurized milk — one such outbreak, traced to a Mat-Su Valley farm, resulted in 18 illnesses in Alaska in 2011. Other sources of *Campylobacter* infection include consumption of undercooked meat, consumption of

food or water cross-contaminated by raw meat, or contact with feces from infected animals. Human to human transmission can also occur.

What can you do?

- If you are currently experiencing symptoms as described above, please contact your health care provider and alert them to this Advisory.
- If you have consumed raw milk in 2013 and subsequently developed a diarrheal illness, please contact the Section of Epidemiology to report the illness and get answers to questions you might have. Please call SOE at 907-269-8000 (in Anchorage) or toll free at 1-800-478-0084 and ask to speak to a member of the Epi-Team.
- Please share this Health Advisory with others you know who consume raw milk.

Additional resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Campylobacter* information:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/campylobacter/>
- General raw milk information:
<http://www.realrawmilkfacts.com/>
- Alaska 2011 Epidemiology *Bulletins* on raw milk-associated *Campylobacter* outbreak:
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_18.pdf
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_22.pdf
- Alaska 2009 Epidemiology *Bulletin* on raw milk:
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2009_29.pdf
- Alaska DEH information on raw milk:
<http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/docs/vet/Dairy/RawMilkSharesFactsheet.PDF>

You are subscribed to the AK Public Health Alert Network for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. This information has recently been updated, and is now available.