



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Region IV Public Health**  
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties  
and Cowlitz Tribe

**Health Advisory**

Please deliver a copy of the accompanying alert to each provider in your organization.

**Thank you**

**Questions regarding this alert may be directed to the office of:**

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH  
**Health Officer**

Clark County Public Health  
Cowlitz County Health Department  
Skamania County Health Department  
Wahkiakum County Department of Health and Human Services  
(360) 397-8412

**Please Distribute**

Categories of Health Alert messages:

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for specific incident for situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.



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## HEALTH ADVISORY

October 26, 2012

TO: Physicians and Other Health Care Providers

FROM: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH, Health Officer

RE: *E. coli* O157:H7 Infection In Patrons of "Willow Grove Gardens"

Cowlitz County Health Department is investigating one lab confirmed case and one probable case (confirmation pending) of *E. coli* O157:H7. Both cases occurred in children after visiting the Willow Grove Gardens Pumpkin Patch in Longview, Washington.

Most persons with confirmed *E. coli* O157:H7 report bloody stools which typically begin 6–48 hours after the initial onset of non-bloody diarrhea. However, mild, non-bloody diarrheal illness is common and asymptomatic infections occur. Symptoms usually begin 3-4 days after infection (range, 1 to 10 days). Abdominal pain and cramping frequently accompany the diarrhea, may be severe and may sometimes be the chief complaint. Nausea and vomiting are common. Fever is generally absent or low-grade in contrast to other bacterial enteric infections. Complications include thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) and hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). HUS complicates 2–15% of diagnosed *E. coli* O157:H7 cases depending on age. Children under 5 years are most frequently affected. HUS is characterized by acute onset of microangiopathic hemolytic anemia, renal injury, and low platelet count.

Supportive therapy with hydration is usually sufficient to treat this infection. Most people recover within 5–10 days without antibiotics and most experts do not recommend the use of antibiotics for treatment. Some studies have shown that the use of antibiotics is associated with the development of HUS. Antidiarrheal agents, such as loperamide (Imodium®), should also be avoided.

Please consider *E. coli* O157:H7 in your differential diagnosis in patients that have diarrhea or other compatible gastrointestinal symptoms and report visiting the Willow Grove Gardens Pumpkin patch, especially if they had contact with the animals in the petting zoo area. Most laboratories that culture stool do not test for *E. coli* O157:H7, so it is important to request that the **stool specimen be tested for this organism.** We request that you test for enteric pathogens, including *E. coli* O157:H7, in these individuals and call us at (360) 414-5599. If you need immediate assistance after hours, please call our on-call staff at (360) 636-9595.

Please restrict cases, including suspected cases, from child care attendance and food handling. Please call your local health jurisdiction to report suspected or confirmed *E. coli* O157:H7.

- Clark County Public Health: (360) 397-8182.
- Cowlitz County Health Department: (360) 414-5599
- Skamania County Community Health: (509) 427-3850
- Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services (360) 795-6207