

News Releases

DHEC News Release: DHEC warns of illness connected to raw shellfish

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 16, 2013

DHEC warns of illness connected to raw shellfish

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) announced today three laboratory-confirmed cases of *Vibrio cholerae* in individuals who had recently consumed raw shellfish.

"We are working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and many partners to identify the source of the contaminated shellfish," said Linda Bell, M.D. and state epidemiologist. "We are informing health care providers of the situation and will continue to monitor the state for additional cases."

There is no evidence that the contaminated shellfish originated in the waters of South Carolina.

DHEC is asking local health care providers to watch for people who become sick or show symptoms of *Vibrio cholerae* after eating raw shellfish. The agency is also notifying South Carolina restaurants of the potential for contaminated shellfish.

"The elderly, young and immune compromised are particularly at risk of developing illness from consuming raw shellfish," said Dr. Bell. "The best way to protect yourself and your family from getting the *Vibrio* illness is to thoroughly cook all shellfish before eating it."

Symptoms of *Vibrio cholerae* include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea that begin from a few hours to up to five days after consumption of raw shellfish. The infection is usually mild or without symptoms, but can occasionally be severe. In severe cases, an infected person may experience profuse watery diarrhea and vomiting that can cause dehydration and shock.

Vibrio cholerae is typically spread through food that is contaminated by the bacteria. **It is important to note that the bacteria causes gastroenteritis, not cholera.**

The agency will continue to work with the FDA and the CDC to investigate the source of the contaminated shellfish.

For more information on *Vibrio cholerae*, please visit

<http://www.fda.gov/food/foodborneillnesscontaminants/causesofillnessbadbugbook/ucm070419.htm>

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