

GRANT COUNTY

County Courthouse
P.O. Box 37
Ephrata, WA 98823
(509) 754-6060



HEALTH DISTRICT

1038 W. Ivy Avenue
Moses Lake, WA 98837
(509) 766-7960

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Contact: Peggy Grigg 509-754-6060, ext 26 Or Jerry Campbell 509-754-6060, ext 24

Grant County Health District Finds Linkages between Salmonella Senftenberg Outbreak and Local Restaurant

Through a lengthy investigation process Grant County Health District and their regional epidemiologist, with cooperation from the State Department of Health, have linked some of the reported 14 cases of Salmonella Senftenberg to the Arby's Restaurant on Stratford Road in Moses Lake. "The management staff and employees have been extremely cooperative throughout the entire investigation." states Jerry Campbell, Director of Environmental Health Services at the Grant County Health District. Because not all cases have been linked to the restaurant at this time, investigation of other potential sources continues.

The Health District will continue to monitor the establishment, and will take any additional steps as necessary. The restaurant is being proactive and has voluntarily taken several actions that are beyond routine requirements to assure the safety of their food. Those steps include the following:

- Only employees with negative Salmonella tests are allowed to work.
- Employees reporting to work must report their current health status related to symptoms of salmonella and/or other food-related illnesses.
- Log books documenting not only strict hand washing schedules but also other practices have been implemented.
- Equipment is being sanitized more frequently than required by the current food rules.

"The health and safety of our employees and customers is our top priority. We appreciate the dedication of the Grant County Health District to work with all of the restaurants in Moses Lake to ensure we're serving great, safe food," said Richard Riva, owner, Arby's Moses Lake.

"We feel this is a good opportunity to remind ALL food establishment owners, managers and employees, that frequent hand washing and staying home when ill is critical to prevent the spread of illnesses through food," said Peggy Grigg, Health District Director of Personal Health Services and Administrator. "Ill food workers should not report to work (or should be excluded), and managers at food establishments should study, learn and follow the latest food code rules, which have been recently revised but are in effect now."

Salmonella is a common germ. About 2,000 different types exist. These bacteria infect the intestines and occasionally the blood. Salmonella can cause serious infections in young children, frail or elderly, and those with weak immune systems. In 2006, Salmonella Senftenberg caused less than 0.1% of all Salmonella cases in Washington. It is not more dangerous than other Salmonella types but it is rare.

The Health District is encouraging people to see their health care provider if they experience the following symptoms, which generally appear one to three days after exposure: Severe diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, fever, chills, abdominal discomfort, and occasionally vomiting.

In light of this recent outbreak, the Public Health staff at the Grant County Health District want to remind people:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after handling foods, after using the bathroom or changing a baby's diaper, and after contact with animals.
- Make sure children, particularly those who handle pets, wash their hands properly.
- Do not allow reptiles in areas where you feed or bathe small children.
- Purchase only inspected eggs, and animal food products, and pasteurized milk and milk products.
- Wrap fresh meat and poultry in plastic bags at the market to prevent blood from dripping on other foods.
- Refrigerate foods promptly.
- Defrost meat and poultry in the refrigerator; minimize holding at room temperature.
- Wash cutting boards and counters used for meat or poultry preparation immediately after use to avoid cross contaminating other foods.
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats, poultry, and eggs.
- Never prepare food for other people if you have diarrhea.
- Do not swim in pools or lakes if you have diarrhea.

For more information please call your healthcare provider, or the Grant County Health District at 754-6060 or 766-7960.