



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY WARNS PUBLIC TO TAKE CARE WHEN EATING RAW OYSTERS *Cooking Oysters to 145°F Can Prevent Gastrointestinal Illness*

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) warn the public to be careful when eating raw oysters.

Twelve people with *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infection have been reported to HHSA Public Health Services between June 1 and Aug. 17. Nine of the 12 said they had consumed raw oysters in Mexico or the United States shortly before onset of illness. Possible symptoms include watery diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever and chills.

“Thoroughly cooking oysters reduces the risk of illness from bacteria,” said Nancy Bowen, M.D., San Diego County Public Health Officer. “*Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infection can cause mild illness in healthy persons, but can be dangerous to those with weak immune systems.”

Ensuring oysters are from a safe and approved source is important, said Gary Erbeck, Director, Department of Environmental Health. “Only purchase oysters with the shells closed,” he said. “Oysters need to be properly refrigerated to minimize the growth of bacteria.”

Hand-washing between handling oysters and other food is essential. Cooking oysters to an internal temperature of 145°F destroys the bacteria, eliminating the risk of illness for healthy people and those with underlying health issues.

Recent reports from the FDA indicate that oysters from the Pacific Northwest have been found to be contaminated with *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*. Anyone who suspects they are ill from this bacteria should contact their health care provider.

For more information, visit www.cfsn.fda.gov or www.cdc.gov, or call the FDA Food Safety hotline at 1-888-SAFEFOOD.

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