



Dutchess County Department of Health Public Health Alert*

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Clusters of *E. Coli* in Dutchess County Students

Date: April 28, 2010 - 12:30 pm

Please Distribute to: Healthcare Providers, Emergency Medicine, Pediatrics, Primary Care, Infectious Diseases, Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Laboratory Medicine, Pulmonary Medicine, Critical Care, and Infection Control.

Schools: Please distribute to School Nurses and Healthcare Offices.

SUMMARY:

- Dutchess County Department of Health (DCDOH) has recently received reports of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) among students in Dutchess County Schools and at least two students with Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome.
- DCDOH recommends cultures (specifically for *E. coli*) to be taken for any individual who has three or more days of diarrheal illness.
- The use of antibiotics has been shown to increase the risk of Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) and should not be used to treat suspected cases.
- SCHOOLS are asked to report to DCDOH any students who have been absent for three or more days due to gastrointestinal illness (GI). Please contact DCDOH at 845.486.3402.

Dutchess County has seen an increase in the number of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) cases in Dutchess County students. Dutchess County Department of Health (DCDOH) is requesting healthcare providers to submit cultures including *E. coli* for any individuals who present with diarrheal illness for more than three days.

DCDOH has also received reports of students being treated for Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS). DCDOH reminds providers recommended treatment for Shiga toxin-producing infections like *E. coli*, is non-specific supportive therapy, including hydration. Antibiotics should not be used to treat this infection. There is no evidence that treatment with antibiotics is helpful, and taking antibiotics may increase the risk of HUS. Antidiarrheal agents like Imodium may also increase that risk. [Reference: www.cdc.gov]

DCDOH has enhanced surveillance to search for additional cases of *E. coli* and gastrointestinal illness reports. Schools are asked for their assistance to provide any reports of student absences of more than three days due to GI to the DCDOH at 845-486-3402.

***Health Alert**- conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention; **Health Advisory**- provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action; **Health Update**- provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Dutchess County Department of Health

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