

Date: June 29, 2010

E. coli cases in Kittitas County prompt closure of two child care facilities

Over the past week, one confirmed and two suspected *E. coli* illness cases have been reported to Kittitas County Public Health Department. The confirmed case, a 5-year old Ellensburg resident, does not attend a child care facility. This child was hospitalized and has since recovered. The two suspected cases, siblings, attend Creative Kids Learning Center and Little Tot Town child care facilities, both in Ellensburg.

During a public health investigation, staff discovered that there are multiple other children and staff members with symptoms of the illness. Since some people with *E. coli* will have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, and there is the potential for person-to-person spread of the illness, Kittitas County Health Officer Dr. Mark Larson is requiring a temporary closure of both facilities, effective immediately.

“We understand that the temporary closure of Creative Kids Learning Center and Little Tot Town will create a hardship for working parents. The decision was not made lightly. We believe that temporarily closing these facilities is the best option to protect the health of these children,” said Dr. Larson. An outbreak of *E. coli* in April 2010 associated with a child care facility in Clark County, Washington resulted in the hospitalization of four children, including one who died from the illness.

Children who attend Creative Kids Learning Center or Little Tot Town will not be able to attend any child care facility until they have two tests showing they are free of illness. These tests must be given at least 24 hours apart. Testing will be free for children who attend either of the affected child care facilities, and test kits can be picked up at the Kittitas Valley Community Hospital laboratory at any time.

E. coli is usually caused by eating or drinking contaminated food or water and can cause abdominal cramping and severe or bloody diarrhea, usually without fever. Most people will recover with treatment but complications can occur, most often in children under the age of five years. Undercooked ground beef, contaminated raw produce, and unpasteurized milk or fruit juices have all caused *E. coli* illnesses in the past. However, the illness can also be spread from person-to-person if infected people do not wash their hands after using a toilet or if a person does not wash their hands after changing the diaper of an infected child.

Please contact your local health care provider if you or your child develops symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (especially bloody diarrhea), or abdominal cramping. Diarrhea medicines such as Imodium should not be given. If *E. coli* is the cause of the diarrhea, these medicines can increase the risk of complications. As with any illness, ill individuals should stay home from child care or work to prevent the spread of illness.

Kittitas County Public Health Department will hold a parent forum to answer questions on June 30 in the Commissioners’ Auditorium at the Kittitas County Courthouse building in Ellensburg at 5:30 p.m. The address of the building is 501 W 5th Ave.

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