

Date: July 9, 2010

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## No additional *E. coli* cases identified, last child care facility to reopen

An *E. coli* outbreak has been ongoing in Kittitas County since June 21, 2010. No new cases of *E. coli* have been reported since July 2, 2010. There have been a total of 13 confirmed cases of *E. coli* illness and 1 suspected case, all in children under 8 years of age.

Three child care facilities were temporarily closed due to the *E. coli* outbreak. Each of the facilities was closed for one week. Two facilities, Creative Kids Learning Center and Little Tot Town, reopened on July 7, 2010. The third center, which was closed last, will to reopen on July 12, 2010.

Testing guidelines that enable children and staff to return to the facilities have been changed at the recommendation of the Department of Health. Kittitas County Public Health Department is no longer requiring testing for *E. coli* illness before returning to care. This decision is based on the incubation period of the illness. If children and staff members have not already developed symptoms of *E. coli* due to their possible exposure at the facilities, it is unlikely that they will. However, children and staff who have not been tested must receive clearance from the health department to return to care before August 2 for Creative Kids Learning Center and Little Tot Town and August 4 for Foursquare Church Daycare and Preschool. This will enable health department staff to continue screening for symptoms of illness.

“It appears that this outbreak is winding down,” according to Health Officer Dr. Mark Larson. “Proper hand hygiene and the separation of ill children from well children are important to reducing the spread of the illness from one person to another.”

*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.

Most people will recover from *E. coli* illness without treatment but complications can occur, most often in children under the age of five years. 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.

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