



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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SALMONELLA INFECTION IN 14 PEOPLE ON OAHU LINKED TO POKE CONTAINING LIMU (also OGO or SEAWEED)

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health is investigating 14 cases of *Salmonella* infection (salmonellosis) on Oahu. Reported cases include both children and adults. All of the cases developed diarrheal illness from mid- to late October and four have required hospitalization. Although a source has not yet been confirmed, preliminary investigations identified consumption of raw fish, specifically poke that contains limu (also called “ogo” or “seaweed”), in common among cases. The tainted limu has been linked to a seaweed farm on Oahu which was ordered by the department to halt operations and advise its customers to remove product from sale immediately.

“Although our investigation is still ongoing, our preliminary investigation has implicated limu, also known as ogo or seaweed, produced at a particular farm on Oahu,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Park. “To protect the public’s health, the department stepped in to make sure this product is no longer being put on the market pending further investigation. At the same time, we want the public to be aware of the situation so they may seek medical care if needed.”

Salmonella is a group of bacteria that can cause illness in humans who come in contact with affected animals or their waste, either by direct contact or by contaminated food or water. Common symptoms of *Salmonella* infection are diarrhea (which may be bloody), abdominal

pain, and fever. Nausea and vomiting can also occur. Symptoms typically begin within 12 to 72 hours after exposure to the bacteria. Persons who are experiencing these symptoms should seek medical care. Infants and the elderly, as well as persons with underlying health conditions or weakened immune systems, are vulnerable to more serious illness and even death.

As with many other foodborne illnesses, *Salmonella* infection can be prevented by thoroughly cooking food to an internal temperature of 165 degrees. Washing hands, kitchen work surfaces, and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw food is also an effective preventive measure. Thorough handwashing after contact with animals, especially birds and reptiles, or pet feces can also prevent spread of *Salmonella*. There is no vaccine to prevent Salmonellosis.

More information about *Salmonella* is available at:

<http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/disease/salmonellosis/>, or by calling the Aloha United Way information and referral line at 2-1-1. For more information on proper handwashing, go to: <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/infectious-disease-surveillance/handwashing>.

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