

**September 22, 2015**

**TO:** Health Care Providers, Hospitals, Laboratories and Ambulatory Care Centers  
**FROM:** Bradley J. Tompkins, MS, MPH, Epidemiologist

## **Cluster of Shiga Toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) Infections**

### **Background**

The Health Department is investigating a cluster of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) infections in Vermont residents. As of September 22, 2015, five (5) laboratory-confirmed STEC infections and one probable case have been identified. All of these cases are associated with a common exposure. Additional cases are possible.

STEC infections can cause diarrhea (often bloody), nausea, stomach cramps and vomiting. Most patients recover from their illness. Approximately 5-10% of cases (especially children younger than age five) develop hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) as a result of their infection.

### **Requested Actions for Clinicians**

#### **1. Report Possible Cases**

Clinicians who see patients that are experiencing symptoms consistent with an STEC infection are asked to immediately contact the Health Department's Infectious Disease Epidemiology Unit at 802-863-7240. An epidemiologist is available 24/7.

#### **2. Test for STEC**

Clinicians who see patients with symptoms of an STEC infection are encouraged to collect a stool specimen and have it tested for STEC. Stool specimens for culture should be collected and preserved in Cary-Blair medium until they can be tested. The Vermont Department of Health Laboratory (VDHL) Kit #1 or appropriate culture specimen container (available from hospital laboratories) should be used for the collection and transport of stool specimens for STEC testing and must be received within 3 days of collection. The VDHL can perform testing for *E. coli* O157:H7 and STEC, with results available the next business day.

## For More Information

CDC Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) Information Page:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/>

Vermont Department of Health Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) Information Page:

[http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/ecoli\\_0157\\_H7/E.coli0157H7.aspx](http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/ecoli_0157_H7/E.coli0157H7.aspx)

## HAN Message Type Definitions

**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.

**Info Service Message:** Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.