



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

1109 North Jackson Street
Albany, Georgia 31701-2022
(229) 430-4599 Fax (229) 430-5143 Emergency 888-430-4590
www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org

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Carolyn Maschke, Public Information Officer
229-430-1969; 229-357-0257; cwmaschke@dhr.state.ga.us

Restaurant voluntarily closes at request of Public Health officials investigating E. coli cluster in Colquitt County

At the request of Southwest Georgia Public Health District, a Moultrie restaurant is voluntarily closing temporarily to give disease investigators full access during their countywide hunt to determine the source of a bacterial infection that has sickened scores of residents within the past month.

“The Barbecue Pit has temporarily ceased operating to make it easier for our investigators to look for possible sources of Escherichia coli (E. coli) 0157. All of the patients with lab-confirmed cases of E. coli have recalled eating there,” said Southwest Georgia Public Health District Deputy Health Director Brenda Greene. “We do not have all the evidence needed to clearly point to any one item as the source of the infection, but want to ensure there is no ongoing risk to the public over the weekend.”

The number of confirmed cases has now risen to five. In addition, three other patients have developed hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a severe illness that is often associated with E. coli infections, and two of those three have also eaten at the Barbecue Pit, Greene said.

“The two patients with HUS are considered probable and we have some other tests pending that are possible cases of E. coli. Patients are still seeking medical treatment for symptoms that suggest the infection remains active, she said.

Greene praised the operators of the Barbecue Pit for working with Public Health to help protect the community from the possibility of exposure to the bacteria. “This is one of their busiest times of the year, so for them to take this voluntary step shows their commitment to the health and safety of their friends and neighbors in the community,” she said.

She also stressed that only a few of the people who ate at the Barbecue Pit (311 First Avenue SE) during the past month have gotten sick. “People who ate there recently but are not feeling sick should not go to the hospital or seek medical treatment. We are only recommending that people who are experiencing significant symptoms, such as bloody diarrhea, see their healthcare provider.”

Teams of disease investigators are also continuing to look at other establishments that may provide clues about the spread of the disease. The probe remains limited to Colquitt County. However, state epidemiologists and health workers from neighboring health districts are offering assistance and Public Health is monitoring for similar clusters of symptoms outside of Colquitt County.

“We don’t have all the data we need, and we are working hard to gather that information,” Greene said.

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth

Symptoms of E. coli include stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhea, which is often bloody. People exposed to E. coli usually begin showing symptoms within three to four days, but the incubation period may be as short as one day or as long as 10 days, Greene said. "Usually people infected with this disease get better without treatment within five to seven days. Some people have mild symptoms or no symptoms, while others may experience severe symptoms."

People infected with E. coli typically shed the bacteria for around a week, she said, stressing that Public Health recommends washing hands thoroughly and often, cooking meat thoroughly and avoiding cross-contamination in food preparation areas.

More information about E. coli is available on-line at www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org or by calling your local county health department.

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