

## **DHEC Update (June 10, 2015): Greenwood County STEC Investigation**

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has provided the following update to a STEC investigation in Greenwood County:

- At this time, DHEC has confirmed **eight (8) cases** of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) in Greenwood County. The cases involve individuals at The Learning Vine childcare facility and their family members.

As part of this ongoing investigation, DHEC today continued to:

- Collect and test samples for laboratory analysis
- Provide updated guidance to individuals affected by the investigation
- Operate a hotline to provide assistance to those affected

### **Investigating the transmission of the infection:**

DHEC is currently working with the CDC, FDA and the childcare facility to investigate the mode of transmission in an effort to stop the spread of the infection. The childcare facility has voluntarily closed and is cooperating with the investigation. On May 18, DHEC was notified of a confirmed case of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) in an individual associated with The Learning Vine. DHEC conducted an interview with the case, who reported being symptom-free since May 11, and provided the case with education on hand hygiene. DHEC looked for other laboratory matches and found no other recent cases of *E. coli* in Greenwood County.

On May 29, DHEC was notified of a case of hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) in Greenwood County. DHEC epidemiologists suspected the case could have Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) and immediately began investigating. Interviews of close contacts of the case and a review of surveillance data revealed that both cases were associated with the same childcare facility in Greenwood County. In response, DHEC immediately opened an investigation of a cluster (more than 1 case) of *E. coli* infections to identify, notify, interview and test other individuals who might be at risk, and collaborated with the S.C. Department of Social Services to investigate the facility. As a result of this testing, on June 7, DHEC received laboratory confirmation of seven (7) cases of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC); the cases involve individuals at the childcare facility and their family members. Lab cultures confirmed that four (4) of these cases have infections that have the same bacteria strain.

On June 7, DHEC and The Learning Vine entered into a public health consent agreement to close the facility to limit the possibility of further spread of the infection. **No information suggests a risk to the broader community at this time.**

DHEC investigative efforts since May 29 have uncovered multiple individuals who have experienced symptoms of diarrheal illness as early as May 1. The agency continues to collect and test samples from all students and staff, and is working to identify the mode of transmission. DHEC will continue to provide updates as they are confirmed and in accordance with state and federal laws.

**Symptoms of STEC and prevention tips:**

Symptoms of STEC infections typically include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting. Most people get better within five to seven days. However, children under 5 years, seniors, pregnant women, and people with a chronic health condition or a weak immune system are more prone to serious complications from *E. coli* infections.

The best way to avoid STEC and other *E. coli* infections is to wash your hands often using soap and warm water after using the bathroom, before eating and when changing diapers. Also, do not send children to daycare, school or other group settings if they are sick, and keep them at home until diarrhea has ended and the child has been cleared by a medical professional.

For more information about STEC and how to prevent it, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general/index.html>.

*\*Note to reporters and editors: Information resulting from this investigation will be provided as it is confirmed, and in accordance with state and federal law. Due to federal privacy restrictions, DHEC is unable to provide additional information concerning any individual, including details about physical condition, hospitalization, age, sex, and residence.*