

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 20, 2015



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SHIGELLA OUTBREAK LINKED TO RESTAURANT EXPOSURE IN SAN JOSE

Santa Clara County, CA: Since Saturday October 17th, over 40 individuals have become acutely ill with fever, abdominal pain, and diarrhea and have been reported to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD); all of these individuals ate at Mariscos San Juan restaurant #3 (205 N. 4th Street in San Jose) on Friday or Saturday (October 16th or 17th). Most of the ill persons reported to SCCPHD have required hospital admission, of which 12 required admission to intensive care. It is suspected that these cases represent only a small proportion of the total cases. Thus far, at least 15 of the reported cases are laboratory confirmed with Shigella (shigellosis). An investigation of this Shigella outbreak is underway, and lab results from additional cases are expected to arrive daily.

The restaurant was closed on the morning of Sunday, October 18th by SCCPHD and the Santa Clara County Department of Environmental Health (DEH), and it will remain closed until the safety of the public can be assured. It is suspected that the disease was spread by an infected food handler, but all possible sources of contamination are currently being investigated.

"Our top priority is to protect the public from any further illnesses and to identify the source of the contamination," said Jim Blamey, Director of the Department of Environmental Health (DEH), "Our specialists have inspected all cooking and safety processes at the restaurant, and are working with the owner and staff to educate them on safe food handling practices."

Santa Clara County Communicable Disease Controller and Deputy Health Officer Dr. George Han noted, "In addition to finding the source of the outbreak, we are focused on finding additional people who were sickened after eating at this restaurant. We are asking physicians and other healthcare providers to test and report any suspected cases to the public health department." Please see the October 19, 2015 Health Alert for reporting instructions: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/sccphd/en-us/pages/phd.aspx>.

"We urge anyone who is ill to seek medical care and to take steps to not spread the infection further. Meticulous hand washing by those who are sick is critical," said Dr. Sara Cody, Santa Clara County Health Officer and Public Health Director. "Our thoughts are with those who are sick as we work to prevent any further illnesses."

Shigellosis is a diarrheal disease caused by a group of bacteria called Shigella. Symptoms of shigellosis typically start within 1–2 days after exposure and include: diarrhea (sometimes bloody), fever, abdominal pain, tenesmus (a painful sensation of needing to pass stools even when bowels are empty), and vomiting. It is spread by eating or drinking something that has come into contact with stool of a person infected with Shigella. For example, food may become contaminated if it has been prepared by an infected food handler; water may be contaminated by infected fecal matter; or hands can be contaminated while changing the diaper of an infected child or caring for an infected person.

In persons with healthy immune systems, symptoms usually last about 5 to 7 days. Persons with diarrhea usually recover completely, although it may be several months before their bowel habits are entirely normal. Shigella can be very serious and in rare cases, fatal. Patients with severe diarrhea or vomiting may become dehydrated and require immediate medical attention to prevent shock.

If you ate at Mariscos San Juan restaurant #3 (205 N. 4th Street in San Jose) on Friday or Saturday, October 16th or 17th, and you had sudden onset of diarrhea and fever within 1–2 days after eating there, please seek medical attention so that you can be tested and, if your symptoms are severe, receive treatment.

Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody and Deputy Health Officer Dr. George Han will be available for media interviews **today** (Tuesday, October 20th) **from 11:00 a.m. to noon** at 976 Lenzen Ave, San Jose CA 95126. Please contact Health Information Officer Allison Thrash to arrange an interview.

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