

Rare Salmonella strain sickens 9 in tuna sushi outbreak

Ken Alltucker, The Republic | azcentral.com 6:31 p.m. MST May 15, 2015

Raw ground tuna in sushi rolls and other sushi dishes could be the cause of a Salmonella outbreak that has sickened at least nine people in Maricopa County, county health officials said.

Nine people have had the same, rare strain of Salmonella, and three of those individuals have been hospitalized. Those individuals fell ill with the same rare strain from April 3-16. No Arizona cases have been reported outside Maricopa County.

County health officials have interviewed eight of the nine people with the same rare strain, and all of them consumed ground tuna at multiple Maricopa County restaurants, said Dr. Bob England, director of Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

England said that the contaminated tuna is likely being shipped to area restaurants. That could mean that a food distributor or manufacturer is the source of contamination, but health and food safety investigators have not yet identified a source, England said.

Because health officials have not identified the source, England said people should be cautious about eating raw ground tuna commonly found in spicy tuna rolls or other sushi dishes.

"It's a good idea to certainly think twice," England said. "The contamination is happening prior to the delivery of the tuna (to area restaurants). It is not just a matter of stopping the sale of tuna at a particular restaurant."

California health officials said the strain found in California is similar to one found in a 2010 outbreak, which was later tracked to an overseas factory.

Symptoms may include nausea, diarrhea or abdominal cramping, and the illness can last four to seven days. Most people recover from the illness, but some are hospitalized and rarely die. Young children, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems face a greater risk of serious illness, England said.

SOURCE: <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona/2015/05/15/maricopa-county-investigating-sushi-salmonella-connection/27401945/>