

Hawke's Bay District Health Board

HAVELOCK NORTH CAMPYLOBACTER OUTBREAK UPDATE

28 September 2016

In this week's update there is a timely reminder for people who have had the Campylobacter infection to be on the alert for complications – Reactive Arthritis and Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS). We also hear from Dr Nicholas Jones, Public Health Physician and Medical Officer of Health, who was prominent during the gastro outbreak discussing his work and what is happening now the outbreak is officially over.

Complications following Campylobacter infection

Recently a person was admitted to Wellington Hospital with Guillain-Barré Syndrome and the public health team in Hawke's Bay has confirmed that this case is linked to the Havelock North Campylobacter outbreak.

It is a reminder to us all that anyone who is recovering from a Campylobacter infection needs to continue to monitor how they are feeling and be aware of potential complications.

Most people who get Campylobacter recover completely within two to five days, although sometimes recovery can take up to 10 days. Rarely, Campylobacter infection can result in complications. These are:

- Reactive Arthritis - symptoms of which include joint pain (commonly knees, ankles and toe pain /swelling), signs of a urinary tract infection and/or sore eyes.
- A rare disease called Guillain-Barré Syndrome that affects the nerves of the body. Symptoms include muscle weakness in legs, arms or face – worsening over the course of the day.

If you develop any of the above symptoms please seek a health care professional's advice immediately. Contact your family doctor (GP). Call Healthline 24/7 for free health advice from a registered nurse Ph 0800 611 116.



**Dr Nicholas Jones
– Public Health
Physician and
HBDHB Medical
Officer of Health**

Dr Jones is one of three Medical Officers of Health working at the Hawke's Bay District Health Board (HBDHB). His main focus is on environmental health. He has been with the DHB since 2009, before which he spent more than 20 years working with government organisations and public health services in New Zealand and overseas.

Dr Jones was Acting Director of Population Health when the outbreak began and he was at the forefront of the health response until coming down with Campylobacter himself six days later. He is coordinating an interagency investigation into what caused the outbreak, working with Hastings District Council, Hawke's Bay Regional Council and scientists from throughout New Zealand.

"While each of the three local agencies is working on separate aspects of the investigation, we are all working closely to pull the threads together," said Dr Jones.

"This involves working with scientists from the Environmental Science Research Institute as well as Massey University and includes advanced analysis methods being used for the first time in New Zealand.

"Safe drinking water is absolutely fundamental for health and given what has happened, we need to be reassured that any risks of contamination are identified and managed so that this doesn't happen again," he said.

Surveillance and monitoring

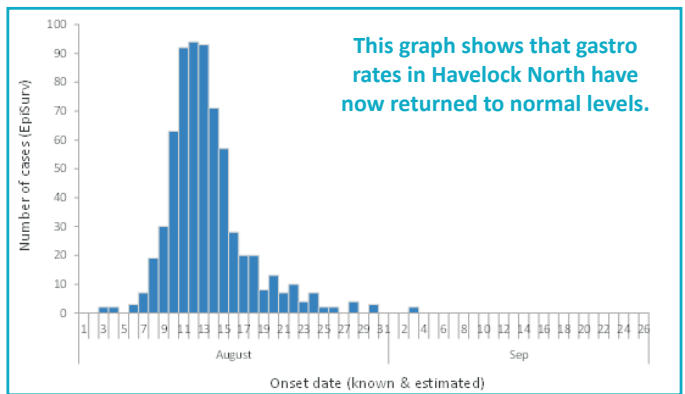
Gastric illness occurs throughout the year and the latest information from The Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) indicates gastroenteritis rates in Havelock North have now returned to normal levels expected at this time of year.

The focus of the DHB's public health team is to make sure there is greater awareness of potential complications if you have been sick. Ongoing surveillance and monitoring is in place and that work continues with Hastings District Council to ensure a safe water supply is maintained.

We can also report that our fourth and final household telephone survey, with a sample group of Havelock North residents who were contacted during the outbreak, will occur this week. This survey will help us gain a better understanding of the social and economic impacts that the outbreak has had.

In addition, a further study will look into the extent of 'reactive arthritis' in the community – the more common of the two post-Campylobacter infections. A telephone survey will be conducted among a sample group of Campylobacter cases that were notified to public health during the outbreak. Other residents who didn't develop Campylobacter may also be invited to participate, to act as a comparison group so that background levels of arthritis-like symptoms can be established.

All outcomes will be shared as part of the Government inquiry.



Information about Chlorine in the water supply

Hastings District Council (HDC) is chlorinating the water in Havelock North, Hastings, Bridge Pa and Flaxmere. The Council is aiming to have a residual chlorine level of 0.7 parts per million (ppm).

The New Zealand Drinking Water Standards allow a range of residual chlorine of between 0.2 to 1.5 ppm. For more detailed advice see HDC website: www.hastingsdc.govt.nz.

Will chlorine affect my health?

Studies indicate that small amounts of chlorine in water does not cause harmful health effects. Its widespread use has been a major factor in reducing illness from waterborne diseases.

If you feel your skin getting dry or 'itchy' use moisturiser after having a shower or bath. If you notice increased skin irritation, asthma symptoms or other symptoms – seek medical advice. Even with the small volumes of chlorine used, some people will be able to taste it and some will notice the smell.

Can chlorine affect existing conditions?

Yes, in a small number of people chlorine can be an irritant for an existing condition such as asthma or eczema. If you notice increased skin irritation, asthma symptoms or other symptoms – seek medical advice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO: www.ourhealthhb.nz or www.hastingsdc.govt.nz

Remember to continue to look out for neighbours, families and anyone living on their own.

We are always interested in your feedback.

Email: comms@hbdhb.govt.nz, Phone: 027 599 9507 or write to: Chief Executive Hawke's Bay District Health Board Private Bag 9014, Hastings 4156