



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**DOH CONFIRMS CASES OF SALMONELLA RELATED TO
EATING RAW TUNA**

HONOLULU — The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) has confirmed 10 cases of illness occurring on O'ahu caused by *Salmonella* Paratyphi B infection related to eating previously frozen internationally imported raw ahi. The individuals, who became ill, reported eating raw ahi (often prepared as poke) purchased or served at various locations on O'ahu.

As of April 12, 2010, there were 13 laboratory confirmed cases with the same *S. Paratyphi B* pattern in five other states: California (7), Maryland (2), Pennsylvania (2), Massachusetts (1), and New York (1). DOH is working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the other states to identify if those cases were also exposed to raw ahi. DOH has informed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) and requested an investigation of international sources of frozen raw ahi.

"The Department of Health is concerned about these cases that are similar to a cluster of cases we investigated two years ago," Health Director Dr. Chiyome Fukino said. "With the help of the USFDA, we hope to identify the source so we can prevent any further illness."

Between October 2007 and February 2008, DOH identified a total of 35 confirmed cases of *Salmonella* Paratyphi B infection on O'ahu. An exhaustive investigation by the department identified raw imported frozen ahi used in ahi poke as the probable source of illness. At that time, confirmation of additional cases in Colorado and California related to the consumption of

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raw fish prompted an investigation by the USFDA, but a definitive source for the implicated ahi could not be identified.

Salmonella typically causes diarrhea (may be bloody), that is often accompanied by abdominal cramps and fever. Symptoms typically begin within one to four days after exposure to the bacteria, although for *S. Paratyphi B*, incubation may be longer (from five to seven days). In infants, persons with poor underlying health, and those with weakened immune systems, *Salmonella* can invade the bloodstream and cause life-threatening infections. Anyone experiencing these symptoms after eating raw fish, meat or poultry should seek medical attention. Healthcare providers are asked to obtain stool cultures for any persons with consistent symptoms and report positive results for *Salmonella* infection to DOH.

Thorough cooking kills *Salmonella* bacteria. For more information on *Salmonella* go to www.hawaii.gov/health.

The Hawai'i State Department of Health Disease Investigation Branch investigates and monitors the frequency of *Salmonella* infection in the state in addition to more than 70 other reportable diseases. The DOH works with healthcare providers and clinical laboratories statewide to identify, monitor, investigate, and track contagious diseases, and implement disease control measures. At the national level, the DOH also participates in reporting and tracking of disease occurring among all states.

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