MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday 6 November 2013

TYPHOID AND OTHER ENTERIC DISEASES
ALERT - Advice for people planning travel to Samoa

The Auckland Regional Public Health Service has seen an unusually high number of people with typhoid fever and shigellosis, particularly earlier this year. As the peak travel season for Samoans travelling to Samoa begins (December 2013 to January 2014), we are expecting the number of cases in people returning to NZ to increase. We want to alert Samoan Aucklanders on ways to keep themselves healthy.

Since the beginning of 2013 there have been 26 cases of typhoid fever and 22 cases of shigellosis notified in Samoan people in Auckland, which is double the number of cases expected each year. Hepatitis A and Salmonellosis are other conditions spread in the same way. Most of these people have had either:

• recent travel to Samoa
• guests staying from Samoa
• consumption of umu (foods) privately imported from Samoa

These diseases are usually caught by eating food or drink accidentally dirtied by faeces or urine. Therefore cleaning and thoroughly cooking food, along with thorough hand washing and drying is essential to help contain the spread of these conditions.

People with typhoid fever often have the following symptoms: a fever (feeling very hot), stomach pain, cough, headache and tiredness. Later they may get rose-coloured spots on the chest and diarrhoea. Some people can get very ill from typhoid fever, and need to be admitted to hospital. Therefore if anyone who thinks they have typhoid fever they should visit their family doctor to get more information and talk through the next steps.

The other illnesses usually cause stomach pains or cramps, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

In order to try and reduce these avoidable illnesses, Auckland Regional Public Health has:

1. Developed six easy-to-read factsheets in both Samoan and English - available on our website at the links at the end of this release.
2. Arranged for improved travel advice on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade “Safe Travel” website.
3. Asked GPs and travel medicine clinics to:
a. promote hand and food hygiene in people planning travel to Samoa
b. advise appropriate pre-travel immunisation for Typhoid and Hepatitis A
c. look out for these illnesses in people who have travelled recently or had visitors from Samoa.

4. Worked to get this advice out via Samoan media and the Samoan community in Auckland.

ENDS

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For more information

ARPHS Factsheets and Hand Hygiene information

• Samoan factsheets: http://www.arphs.govt.nz/health-information/resources/non-english-resources


• Hand hygiene: http://www.arphs.govt.nz/health-information/communicable-disease/hand-hygiene

MFAT SafeTravel website – useful advice for intending travellers:
http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/beforeugo/health.shtml#typhoid