Staphylococcal Enterotoxin B
PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Staphylococcal Enterotoxin B?
Staphylococcal Enterotoxin B is a toxin produced by the bacterium Staphylococcus aureus. The toxin is normally acquired through ingestion of improperly handled food and is a common source of unintentional outbreaks of food poisoning. The toxin can also be weaponized into small particle aerosols, creating a bioterrorism agent.

How is it spread?
In most cases, the infection is acquired by eating food or water contaminated by persons not practicing safe food handling.
When used as a bioterrorist weapon, the toxin can also be aerosolized or used to sabotage food supplies. It is not likely to produce significant mortality; however it has the ability to incapacitate persons for up to two weeks. If left untreated, higher exposure can lead to septic shock and death. There is no person-to-person transmission.

How is it treated?
- No vaccine exists for treatment
- Antibiotics are of no benefit and no antitoxin has been developed.
- Supportive care by treatment of symptoms and respiratory support

How can we prevent Staphylococcal Enterotoxin B?
- Good personal hygiene is important to prevent the spread of the toxin, especially handwashing.
- Do not allow persons with boils or wounds on their hands to prepare food.
- Investigation and treatment of initial cases is important to avoid spread of the toxin.
- Report suspect cases to your local health department.

SYMPTOMS OF STAPHYLOCOCCAL ENTEROTOXIN B

Foodborne Disease
Symptom onset 2-4 hours after ingestion of the toxin:
- Severe Diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Inhaled toxin:
Symptom onset 3-12 hours after exposure to the toxin:
- High fever
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Cough
- Respiratory failure
- Sharp chest pain
- Death from Toxic shock-like syndrome

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