

# 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



**Dickinson-Iron District Health Department**

[www.didhd.org](http://www.didhd.org)

**818 Pyle Drive  
Kingsford, MI 49802  
906-774-1868**

**601 Washington Ave.  
Iron River, MI 49935  
906-265-9913**