
Date: June 8, 2011

To: MicroNet Partners, Laboratory Directors and Managers

Cc: AHS Medical Officers of Health and AHW Medical Officers of Health

From: Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)

Re: Shiga toxin – producing *Escherichia coli* Testing Requests

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Key Message:

An outbreak of non-O157 Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) O104:H4 has been occurring since May 1, 2011 in Europe and continues to occur as of June 6, 2011. Currently, not all microbiology laboratories in Alberta have the ability to test for Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) on a routine basis.

The Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab) currently offers PCR to detect *Shiga toxin1* (*stx1*) and *Shiga toxin2* (*stx2*) genes.

On an interim basis as a result of this outbreak in Europe, it is requested that:

1. For laboratories that do NOT perform Shiga toxin testing, stool specimens associated with travel cases of diarrhea and/or HUS from Europe (especially Germany) with onset since May 1, 2011 **AND** with no other routine bacterial enteric pathogens identified, are to be referred to the ProvLab for PCR detection of Shiga toxins.
2. For laboratories that do perform Shiga toxin testing, non-O157 Shiga toxin positive stool samples or respective enrichment broth cultures are to be referred to the ProvLab for further STEC identification.

All laboratories should continue to perform their routine microbiology workup on all stool specimens as per usual procedures.

Laboratories referring samples to the ProvLab are to clearly indicate onset date, travel history to Europe, request for Shiga toxin PCR testing and/or STEC identification.

A separate bulletin will be sent out by the Medical Officer of Health to physicians and health practitioners to request that illness onset and travel history be clearly written on submitting requisitions for “diarrheal” / HUS cases.

For additional questions contact:

- Edmonton Site – Ph: 780-407-7121 (ask for Microbiologist on call)
- Calgary Site – Ph: 403-944-1200 (ask for Microbiologist on call)

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by Dr. Marie Louie, Acting Medical Director of ProvLab