

February 6, 2017

## HEALTH OFFICIALS IN COLUMBIA COUNTY CONDUCT INVESTIGATION OF POTENTIAL FOODBORNE ILLNESS



**Contact:**

DOH-COLUMBIA

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**Lake City, Fla. –** The Florida Department of Health in Columbia County is working with local school officials to investigate a potential foodborne illness cluster following a science fair luncheon held at Florida Gateway College in Lake City on February 4, 2017.

A meal served at the science fair event is being investigated as the potential source of the illnesses. DOH-Columbia collected leftover food samples immediately following the event and is arranging for food testing at Bureau of Public Health Laboratories in Jacksonville. Once received, the results will be shared with school officials, attendees and parents. It is important for those affected by foodborne illness or 'food poisoning' to stay hydrated, rest and seek attention from a medical provider if their symptoms worsen or become severe.

Two foodborne toxin producing bacteria called Staph aureus and Bacillus cereus are compatible with the symptoms the group experienced. Both cause symptoms to occur within a short period of time following a meal (usually within 6 hours), which is what school officials have reported. Both are characterized by vomiting, stomach cramps and a quick onset following a meal. The symptoms often go away within 24 hours.

Foodborne illnesses are not spread from person-to-person and only those who attended the luncheon and ate the meal served would have developed symptoms.

Some helpful resources which describe several of the toxins that can cause the symptoms experienced by the group include:

- Staph Aureus Food Toxin: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/diseases/staphylococcal.html>
- Bacillus Cereus Emetic Type: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/causes/bacteriaviruses/bcereus/>

To report a potential food borne illness related to this event please contact Marjorie Rigdon, Director of Nursing for the Florida Department of Health in Columbia County at 386-758-1334.

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