

Heat Increases Poisoning

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County Health Officer

The frequency of food poisoning outbreaks probably reaches a peak during the hot summer months though cases do occur throughout the year. These outbreaks follow the eating of contaminated food which may be consumed in the home, in public eating places, at community gatherings of one sort or another, in institutions, or on a family picnic. Already some 551 cases of food poisoning have occurred in Los Angeles County since the first of the year, and the summer is just now beginning.

Food poisoning or food infection occurs when food is eaten that is contaminated with certain bacteria or their toxic products. The organisms usually associated with food poisoning are staphylococcus, salmonella, botulinus, streptococcus, and other allied groups. Those most commonly associated with food poisoning in this country are certain strains of staphylococci and salmonellae, and the majority of cases of foodborne illness are traced to either one or the other of these groups.

THE MOST common form of food poisoning results from food contamination by certain strains of staphylococci. These organisms are just about everywhere and may be found in the mouth and throat, on any body surface, and also in pimples and boils or infected cuts. Food contamination by these bacteria is therefore very easy, particularly when the food handler is careless about handwashing or has a "staph" skin infection.

Under proper refrigeration staph will not grow in food, but when contaminated food is left at room temperature for several hours, the organisms grow and multiply rapidly. During this process the bacteria produce a poisonous substance called enterotoxin, and it is this toxin that is the actual cause of illness.

WHILE cooking will destroy the bacteria, it does not destroy the toxin. So, once contaminated, such food cannot again be made safe by any cooking process.

Staph organisms grow best in foods containing custard or cream fillings, milk and egg products, processed meats—especially tenderized hams, poultry, mayonnaise, meat and egg salads and the like.

The symptoms of this form of food poisoning are violent nausea and vomiting, prostration, and sometimes severe diarrhea, and these occur abruptly in from one-half to four hours after the contaminated food is eaten. The most recent outbreak of this nature in Los Angeles County occurred a few days ago and involved more than 350 institutionalized persons. Results of laboratory examination of food samples taken from the meal that caused the outbreak indicate that in this instance, ham was the toxic product.

ASIDE from the distress it causes, staph food poisoning is not usually serious and is generally over in 12 to 36 hours. It may be more dangerous when it occurs in very young children, in the very old, or in persons who are already debilitated by disease.

Salmonella food poisoning is a true bacteria infection in which the bacteria multiply within the body. It is not the result of a toxin as is the case in staph food poisoning. Salmonella organisms are killed by thorough cooking, but if the cooking is less than thorough or if the food is contaminated with these bacteria after cooking is completed, food poisoning can result. The foods most

usually involved include eggs from infected ducks and hens, turkeys, unpasteurized milk and dairy products, prepared meats, meat pies, and so forth.

SYMPTOMS of this form of food poisoning are much like those associated with staph but with the addition of fever. It takes from six to 24 hours or longer, usually 12 hours, for signs of illness to develop. Though this form of salmonella infection is seldom fatal, recovery may take two or three weeks.

Foodborne illness can generally be prevented if scrupulous cleanliness and care are taken in the handling and preparation of foods and if, depending on what they are, perishable foods are kept either piping hot or extremely cold.

A pamphlet giving rules for safe food will be mailed to anyone who sends a card of request to the Health Education Division, Los Angeles County Health Department, 241 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 12.

Telephone Executive Says Firm Needs Money for Its Expansion

"If Pacific Telephone is to go ahead with service expansions and improvements, outlays of money, in many cases very substantial sums will be required," Ward C. Schweizer, operations vice president of the firm said this week.

Schweizer told a California Public Utilities Commission hearing, "If we don't have the earnings to make the expenditure wisely, we cannot go ahead with the spending and put the company in a financially shaky position."

"With the improved operating conditions and earnings following this commission's last rate order, we felt ourselves able to make such outlays with confidence," he said.

"HOWEVER," he continued, "without reasonable confidence of a solid financial position, it is natural to be more hesitant about spending money for innovations, however desirable and economical these innovations are expected to be in the long run."

Schweizer said that service improvements and expansions are necessities if the company is to keep, year after year, in a position to give the public all of the service which it wants and needs.

"But we cannot do what we want to do when we want to do it without the earnings to do it with."

PACIFIC TELEPHONE has provided Californians with vast service improvements during the past five years, Schweizer

said. "Along with our service improvements, we have operated since 1958 without increases in our intrastate rates and charges for communication services. To the contrary, such charges to our customers since July 1, 1958 have been reduced by over 10 million dollars a year."

"We have developed and used better and more efficient techniques, tools, methods, training and procedures providing for faster, more pleasing and more reliable service,"

he added. "The telephone executive said that 'With confidence that the Commission will not suffer our earnings to deteriorate, we hope and expect to continue this same course of continuous expansion and improvement of our many services, and the provision of new ones, as fast as they become useful and needed in our ever-changing world.'"

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Bruinsma Heads New Company

Solaray, Inc. of Torrance has been acquired by Solaray Industries, Inc., it was reported here this week. The new company acquired control of the Solaray firm June 1.

The company manufacturers reflective discs. It will continue operations from a new Southern California plant.

Ted Bruinsma will be president of the new corporation. He and Richard M. Mock acquired control of the firm.