

# MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS **ALERT** FOR PHYSICIANS

August 29, 2019

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## Confirmed case of *Trichinella* infection in Penticton

A case of *Trichinella* infection has been confirmed in a Penticton resident who consumed ground bear meat distributed by local community organizations between June 1, 2019 and August 19, 2019.

### Actions

If patients present with gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms AND/OR when trichinosis is in your differential diagnosis AND there is a history of ground meat consumption, including bear meat, sourced locally and distributed during this timeframe:

1. Conduct serological testing for *Trichinella* species and treat with anthelmintic agents where clinically appropriate.
2. Call the Interior Health Communicable Disease Unit if you have a patient who may have been exposed at 1-866-778-7736, and inform the client that our staff will be in contact with them.

### Background

Interior Health Medical Health Officers recently became aware of a Penticton resident who is a confirmed case of *Trichinella* infection. The case consumed bear meat received in a hamper from a charitable organization and this is likely the source of their infection. The bear meat had a broad local distribution, which included at least two local charitable organizations, their clients and volunteers, and food hamper recipients. Bear meat was distributed between June 1, 2019 and as recently as August 19, 2019.

Interior Health is in the process of contacting individuals who may have received and consumed this bear meat and are at risk of *Trichinella* infection. If people present with some or any of the symptoms or signs of trichinosis we recommend you ask about consumption of any ground meat, including bear meat, they received from community organizations during the above noted timeframe. There may also be individuals who consumed the bear meat without realizing it was bear. Please call the Interior Health Communicable Disease Unit at 1-866-778-7736 if you have a patient who may have been exposed, and inform the client that our staff will be in contact with them.

## Signs and Symptoms of Trichinosis

- The incubation period of *Trichinella* is between 7 and 30 days with the length of onset and severity of symptoms varying by infectious dose.
- Initial symptoms are typically gastrointestinal (GI) in nature and include abdominal discomfort, nausea, vomiting and non-bloody diarrhea. Muscle pain, tenderness, swelling, fever, and weakness may appear several weeks later with more severe systemic symptoms developing over 4 to 8 weeks.
- Physical findings may include subungual splinter hemorrhages, conjunctival and retinal hemorrhages, periorbital edema, visual disturbance and ocular pain.
- There is often an associated eosinophilia which appears early in the disease. More serious and rare cases may include cardiac, central nervous system, renal and/or pulmonary involvement.

## Testing and Treatment of Trichinosis

Serological testing for '*Trichinella* species' is advised, and patients with a positive exposure history and positive serology result should be treated with anthelmintic agents where clinically appropriate.

- Persons with more severe disease may need additional therapy including steroids and consultation with a specialist is recommended.

## Contact Information

If you have any questions or require further information please contact the IH Communicable Disease Unit at 1-866-778-7736 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30) or the Medical Health Officer on-call at 1-866-457-5648 (Evenings and Weekends).