



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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ILLNESSES FROM SPAM MUSUBI REPORTED ON MAUI

HONOLULU — The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) recently received reports of gastrointestinal illnesses related to consumption of spam musubi on the island of Maui. Since July 2006, there have been six separate incidents of confirmed or probable staphylococcal intoxication (food poisoning) associated with spam musubi. These incidents involved a total of nine ill persons, two of whom were children who received care at Maui emergency departments. Most of the ill have been young children (ages 3-9 years).

Consumer mishandling of the spam musubi (holding without proper refrigeration for too long before eating) may have caused some of the illnesses. The DOH is investigating the cause and reminds consumers that spam musubi (and similar foods like bentos) are a highly perishable food product. Such foods should be kept at safe temperatures (Hot 140°F or above; or Cold 45°F or below) or eaten within four hours of preparation.

The illnesses have been associated with spam musubi purchased from a number of different vendors on Maui. DOH is conducting an investigation of retail and production establishments. Sanitation inspectors on Maui are also conducting random checks on retailers to ensure time and temperature requirements are being met by those that sell spam musubi and other “ready to eat” perishable foods.

Perishable foods must not be at unsafe temperatures for more than four hours total. This time includes time for preparation, transportation, and storage. If spam musubis or other “ready to eat” perishable foods are displayed at room temperature, they must be labeled with a date and discard time after which they may not be sold. “Ready to eat” perishable foods should be eaten immediately or within a short period of time. Refrigeration after purchase of these foods is not recommended because the product has already been held at unsafe temperatures and bacteria (if present) could begin to multiply and cause illness if eaten.

Additional safety tips on the preparation and storage of perishable foods is available on the DOH website at www.hawaii.gov/health

(more)

Illnesses from spam musubi reported on Maui

Staphylococcal intoxication is an acute gastrointestinal illness characterized by sudden onset of vomiting, usually followed by diarrhea. There is no fever associated with this illness, and symptoms usually resolve in a day. The most common complication is dehydration.

Illness following consumption of spam musubi should be reported immediately by telephone to the Disease Investigation Branch at:

Oahu Disease Investigation Branch..... (808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office (808) 984-8213
Kauai District Health Office (808) 241-3563
Hawaii District Health Office (Hilo) (808) 933-0912
Hawaii District Health Office (Kona)..... (808) 322-4877

After hours on Oahu..... (808) 566-5049
After hours on neighbor islands 1(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

Improper storage of spam musubi in retail establishments should be reported to the Department of Health at:

Oahu Food and Drug Branch Phone (808) 586-4725
Maui Environmental Health (808) 984-8230
Kauai Environmental Health (808) 241-3323
Hawaii Environmental Health Hilo (808) 933-0917
Kona (808) 322-1507

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