



## *IDPH News Release*

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### **New Food Poisoning Detection and Response Initiative Announced**



The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced a new joint initiative with the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) that should reduce the impact of reported foodborne illness in Iowa. “These departments have joined forces to establish a statewide one-call system Iowans can use to report illnesses associated with food poisoning,” said IDPH Medical Director, Dr. Patricia Quinlisk. “Once a call is made to the IowaSic hotline (1-844-469-2742), trained specialists will begin an investigation into the cause and source of the illness, which could greatly reduce the number of ill Iowans.”

The 2013 Cyclospora outbreak, which was responsible for sickening at least 127 individuals in Iowa, Nebraska, and other Midwest states, is a good example of how foodborne illness investigations are conducted. During the 2013 outbreak, epidemiologists and food safety specialists, working in collaboration with the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL), were able to trace the cause of the Cyclospora outbreak to fresh produce grown and packaged in Mexico. The contaminated product had been distributed to a national restaurant chain where it eventually was consumed by patrons primarily in Iowa and Nebraska.

“Iowa was the first state to positively identify the cause of the outbreak, which permitted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to trace it back to the source,” said Dr. Quinlisk. “Had the IowaSic hotline and supporting processes been in place in 2013, it’s possible the duration and impact of the outbreak could have been reduced.”

The IowaSic hotline will be answered by IDPH specialists who will ask callers about the illness, symptoms, onset and duration, and also complete a history of all foods consumed for the past several days. Illnesses associated with foods purchased from or consumed at food establishments will be investigated by staff in DIA’s Food and Consumer Safety Bureau.

Food poisoning happens after eating or drinking contaminated foods or beverages, and occur at any time throughout the food preparation process, including growing, distribution processes, storage, cooking, and service. Often, foodborne illness is the result of cross-contamination, poor hygiene, or improper heating and cooling of prepared foods. If you suspect food poisoning after consuming an item from a restaurant, grocery store, convenience store, market or public gathering, call IDPH’s IowaSic hotline at 1-844-469-2742.