

Gateway Reference: 16148

26 May 2011

## **OUTBREAK OF HAEMOLYTIC URAEMIC SYNDROME IN GERMANY**

This is to alert you to a large outbreak of Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS) in Germany. To date, 217 cases of HUS have been reported in Germany since the second week of May. Verotoxin producing *Escherichia coli* (VTEC), a recognised cause of bloody diarrhoea and HUS, has been confirmed in a small number of cases.

The outbreak is unusual in that the majority of cases are adults, with a predominance of females, and is associated with a rare serogroup, O104. To date three deaths have been reported. Two possible cases with compatible symptoms and recent travel to Germany are currently reported in England. Investigations have concluded that contaminated raw lettuce, tomatoes and cucumber are implicated as the vehicle of infection.

Clinicians are asked to urgently consider the possibility of this infection in patients who have recently travelled to Germany who present with symptoms of bloody diarrhoea, HUS or thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP). Cases should be investigated according to the HPA VTEC Operational Manual:

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb\\_C/1279889252950](http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1279889252950)

Clinicians are reminded that patients presenting with bloody diarrhoea should always be referred for immediate specialist review, and all patients require urgent microbiological investigation.