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For Immediate Release

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Media Availability: with Dr. Bob England, PLEASE CALL FIRST

Maricopa County and Arizona Department of Health Services Investigating Outbreak of Rare *Salmonella* paratyphi associated with Raw Minced or Ground Tuna in Sushi

PHOENIX (May 15, 2015) – Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) in collaboration with Maricopa County Environmental Services Department (MCESD) and Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) are investigating an outbreak of a rare strain of *Salmonella* paratyphi associated with raw minced or ground tuna in sushi, as is used in the making of spicy tuna rolls and other sushi rolls/dishes. There have been 9 cases in Maricopa County with disease onset from April 3rd to April 16th, three of whom have been hospitalized.

“We are early into the investigation, but from the interviews we have completed with those who have gotten sick, there are multiple restaurants involved,” said Dr. Bob England, director of Maricopa County Department of Public Health. “That is strong evidence that the contamination is occurring before it gets to the restaurant.”

“Anyone with *Salmonella* symptoms such as nausea, diarrhea and abdominal cramping, especially after recently eating raw ground tuna, should seek medical attention. Healthcare providers are advised to get stool cultures from patients presenting with diarrhea and fever,” England added.

The illness lasts about 4-7 days. Most people recover without treatment but illness can sometimes be severe leading to hospitalization or rarely, death. Although *Salmonella* is not common in raw fish, consumption of raw or undercooked meats and seafood can cause foodborne illnesses including *Salmonella*. The elderly, very young and those who have weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe illness associated with *Salmonella*.

The most common sources of *Salmonella* infection are undercooked poultry, eggs, and meat. Pet birds and reptiles as well as other pets can transmit *Salmonella*. To prevent illness, thorough hand washing with soap and water prior to food preparation or consumption and after using the toilet is recommended. *Salmonella* can be killed by cooking foods to an internal temperature of 165°F. Therefore, consumers of raw or undercooked fish and meat products may be at an increased risk of illness.

Several other states are also investigating cases of this rare strain of *Salmonella* associated with exposure to raw ground tuna in sushi. MCDPH, MCESD and ADHS are working with the other affected states and the Centers for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration to further define the source of the *Salmonella*.

Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) is the 3rd largest health jurisdiction in the US serving almost 4 million residents. The Department works to protect and promote the health and well-being of Maricopa County residents and visitors through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services as well as by utilizing policy, systems and environmental approaches. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit www.WeArePublicHealth.org or like us at www.facebook.com/MCDPH or follow us on Twitter @MaricopaHealth.

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