

## Abstract

# Food Poisoning in the Town of Hatem, Irbid (Jordan)

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## Abstract

**Background:** On 14 September 2017, one hundred and one residents in the town of Hatem in Irbid (Jordan) were admitted to local healthcare center and a city hospital in Irbid with symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain after eating a meal from a nearby restaurant.

**Objective:** Identify the cause and mode of transmission and to implement control measures.

**Methods:** The food poisoning outbreak was described by time, person, and place. A case was defined as any person with two or more of the following symptoms: diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain, who had been in the town of Hatem (Irbid) in the period 14-19 September 2017. We conducted a cohort study and collected data on demographics, water sources, and food sources. We conducted environmental survey for water sources and for food in local restaurants for fecal contamination, and tested water, food, and stool samples for microorganisms.

**Results:** Among 8,000 residents, we identified 101 food poisoning cases. Outbreak was during 14-19 September 2017 with peak (73 cases) on 17 September 2017. Attack rate was the highest among residents aged 10-19 years (47 cases) and residents aged 5-9 years (33 cases). Females were more affected than males (58% vs. 42%). The food poisoning outbreak was associated with taking Hommos meal and Falafel from a local restaurant. The stool samples of patients and the restaurant owner were positive for *Shigella sonnei* and *Escherichia coli*. The ground Hommos samples taken from the local restaurant were positive for *Shigella sonnei*.

**Conclusions:** The food poisoning outbreak in the town of Hatem in Irbid (Jordan) was associated with eating Hommos meal and Falafel from a local restaurant contaminated with *Shigella sonnei*. We recommend periodic inspection and active monitoring of water and food, as well as of the caterers, across the county to reduce the likelihood of such outbreaks.

(*iproc* 2018;4(1):e10575) doi: [10.2196/10575](https://doi.org/10.2196/10575)

*Edited by Y Khader; this is a non-peer-reviewed article. Submitted 29.03.18; accepted 29.03.18; published 29.03.18.*

Please cite as:

Khreisat Z, Alqasrawi S, Abdallat M

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*iproc* 2018;4(1):e10575

URL: <http://www.iproc.org/2018/1/e10575/>

doi: [10.2196/10575](https://doi.org/10.2196/10575)

PMID:

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