



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY
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Consumption of Raw Fish Raises Potential Health Concerns for Consumers
Ingested Larvae Can Lead to Cramping, Diarrhea, Vomiting, Possible Small Bowel Obstruction

Philadelphia, PA, October 15, 2007 – Two case studies from Japan presented at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the American College of Gastroenterology point to a potential health problem in the United States, as more Americans consume raw fish in the form of sushi and sashimi. Anisakiasis (round worm) is a human parasitic infection caused by the consumption of raw or undercooked seafood containing Anisakis larvae. Consumers should be aware that while larvae for the parasitic worm Anisakis cannot survive in a human host, the ingested larvae can produce severe intestinal problems warranting a visit to the emergency room.

When ingested by humans, the larvae attach themselves to the tissues lining the stomach and intestines, resulting in sudden abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Since the larvae cannot survive in humans and eventually die, intestinal anisakiasis usually resolves on its own.

Researchers in Japan examined two cases of intestinal anisakiasis presenting as an obstruction of the small intestine. In each case, both patients, ages 64 and 70, were rushed to the emergency room with sudden abdominal pain and vomiting after eating raw sardines as sashimi two days earlier. The diagnosis of anisakiasis in the stomach can easily be confirmed by endoscopy. However, small intestinal anisakiasis is difficult to diagnose. Both patients had abdominal X-rays showed air-fluid levels suggesting a small intestinal obstruction. Using a multidetector-row computed tomography (MDCT), doctors obtained high quality images of the small bowel, and found the intestinal blockage was caused by the presence of Anisakis larvae. Fluid replacement and resting immediately relieved the patients' symptoms.

Because the symptoms of anisakiasis can mimic other gastrointestinal diseases, it might potentially be misdiagnosed as appendicitis, acute abdomen (peritonitis) or stomach ulcers. According to Mashahiro Matshushita, MD of Haibara General Hospital, "Anisakiasis should be considered in the differential diagnosis of small intestinal obstruction."

About the American College of Gastroenterology

Founded in 1932, the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) is an organization with an international membership of more than 10,000 individuals from 80 countries. The College is committed to serving the clinically oriented digestive disease specialist through its emphasis on scholarly practice, teaching and research. The mission of the College is to serve the evolving

needs of physicians in the delivery of high quality, scientifically sound, humanistic, ethical, and cost-effective health care to gastroenterology patients.

The ACG is committed to providing accurate, unbiased and up-to-date health information. Visit the ACG Web site www.acg.gi.org to access educational resources for patients and their families spanning the broad range of digestive diseases and conditions - both common and not-so-common. Organized by disease, state and organ system, these educational materials, developed by ACG physician experts, are offered for the information and benefit of patients and the public.

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