

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Environmental Health Section

EHS Circular Letter #2018-02

To: Local Health Departments

From: Tracey Weeks, MS, RS
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Date: April 13, 2018

Subject: Multi-State *E. coli* O157 Outbreak Associated with Romaine Lettuce

CDC announced today that a multi-state outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 is being investigated. Currently 35 cases in 11 states have been identified. Twenty-two people have been hospitalized (including 3 cases with hemolytic uremic syndrome) and there have been no deaths. Connecticut has 2 cases related to this outbreak. It is likely that additional cases will be identified as CDC and state health departments continue to investigate.

Epidemiologic evidence collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce is the likely source of this outbreak, however, no common grower, supplier, distributor, or brand has been identified. Preliminary information collected to date indicates that the chopped romaine lettuce was from the Yuma, Arizona growing region. According to CDC "Most people reported eating a salad at a restaurant, and romaine lettuce was the only common ingredient identified among the salads eaten. The restaurants reported using bagged, chopped romaine lettuce to make salads. At this time, ill people are not reporting whole heads or hearts of romaine."

Local health departments are advised to share information about this outbreak with restaurants and retailers to inform them of CDC's advice not to serve romaine lettuce unless they are sure it did not originate from the Yuma, Arizona growing area. More specific information will be provided when it becomes available. Inquiries from consumers who believe they may be ill from consuming romaine lettuce should contact their medical provider.



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Advice posted by CDC is provided below. For the full report go to: [CDC E. coli outbreak information](#).

CDC advises:

Advice to Consumers, Restaurants, and Retailers

Information collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region could be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7 and could make people sick.

Advice to Restaurants and Retailers

- Restaurants and retailers should not serve or sell any chopped romaine lettuce, including salads and salad mixes containing chopped romaine lettuce, from the Yuma, Arizona growing region.
- Restaurants and retailers should ask their suppliers about the source of their chopped romaine lettuce.

Advice to Consumers

- Consumers anywhere in the United States who have store-bought chopped romaine lettuce at home, including salads and salad mixes containing chopped romaine lettuce, should not eat it and should throw it away, even if some of it was eaten and no one has gotten sick. If you do not know if the lettuce is romaine, do not eat it and throw it away.
 - Wash and sanitize drawers or shelves in refrigerators where chopped romaine was stored. Follow these [five steps](#) to clean your refrigerator.
- Before purchasing romaine lettuce at a grocery store or eating it at a restaurant, consumers should confirm with the store or restaurant that it is not chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region. If you cannot confirm the source of the romaine lettuce, do not buy it or eat it.
- [Take action](#) if you have symptoms of an *E. coli* infection:
 - Talk to your healthcare provider.
 - Write down what you ate in the week before you started to get sick.
 - Report your illness to the health department.
 - Assist public health investigators by answering questions about your illness.
- Follow these [general ways to prevent](#) *E. coli* infection:
 - Wash your hands. Wash hands after using the restroom or changing diapers, before and after preparing or eating food, and after contact with animals.
 - Don't prepare food or drink for others when you are sick.

- Cook meats thoroughly to kill harmful germs. Cook steaks and roasts to at least 145°F and let rest for 3 minutes after you remove meat from the grill or stove. Cook ground beef and pork to at least 160°F. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of the meat.
- Don't cross-contaminate food preparation areas. Thoroughly wash hands, counters, cutting boards, and utensils after they touch raw meat.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating, unless the package says the contents have been washed.
- Avoid raw milk, other unpasteurized dairy products, and unpasteurized juices.