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Ground beef recall in Mass. linked to dangerous E. coli infections

By [Deborah Kotz](#) | GLOBE STAFF MAY 19, 2014

About 1.8 million pounds of ground beef shipped to Massachusetts and three other states have been recalled due to possible contamination with dangerous E. coli O157:H7, the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announced on Monday. The agency said it received reports of 11 people in four states — including one person in Massachusetts — who developed E. coli O157:H7 infections linked to the ground beef from April 22 to May 2.

The investigation is ongoing, however, and the number of infected people is likely to rise.

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The ground beef products were produced by Wolverine Packing Company between March 31 and April 18, and were shipped to distributors to sell for use in restaurants.

"While none of the Wolverine Packing product has tested positive for the pathogen implicated in this outbreak, the company felt it was prudent to take this voluntary recall action in response to the illnesses and initial outbreak investigation findings," Chuck Sanger, spokesman for Wolverine Packing, said in a statement.

All of the illnesses involved consumers, ages 19 to 46, who ate undercooked hamburgers at restaurants in the four states, which also include Michigan, Missouri, and Ohio, according to Wolverine Packing. All of the ground beef involved was fresh, and was not labeled for retail sale in supermarkets.

The company said the 24-day shelf life of the most recently packaged recalled product — produced on April 18 — expired one week ago. The ground beef was produced at one of Wolverine's Michigan plants.

Recalled products are marked with the establishment number "EST. 2574B" and have a production date code in the format "Packing Nos: MM DD 14" between "03 31 14" and "04 18 14."

None of the meat was used in the National School Lunch Program, according to FSIS officials.

The E. coli O157:H7 strain is a potentially deadly bacterium that can cause dehydration, bloody diarrhea, and abdominal cramps two to eight days after exposure. While most people recover within a week, some develop a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). This condition is most common in children under five years and elderly adults and can be detected via certain signs like easy bruising, pale skin tone, and decreased urination. Persons who experience these symptoms should seek emergency medical care immediately, according to the USDA.

FSIS advises all consumers to safely prepare their raw meat products, including fresh and frozen, and only consume ground beef that has been cooked to a temperature of 160° F. The only way to confirm that ground beef is cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful bacteria is to use a food thermometer that measures internal temperature.

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