

E. coli Outbreak Linked to Packaged Salads



Food Safety Alert

Posted March 3, 2022

This outbreak is over. Stay up to date on food recalls and outbreaks to avoid getting sick from eating contaminated food.

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 10
- Hospitalizations: 4
- Deaths: 1
- [States](#): 4
- Recall: No
- Investigation status: Closed



What You Should Do

Vegetables, including leafy greens, are an important part of a healthy and balanced diet. However, they can sometimes be contaminated with harmful germs.

The safest produce is cooked; the next safest is washed. However, no washing method can remove all germs.

When eating raw leafy greens:

- **Wash** your hands, utensils, and surfaces before and after preparing leafy greens.
- **Clean** leafy greens before eating or cutting them.
 - Discard outer leaves on whole heads of lettuce and any torn or bruised leaves.
 - Rinse under running water and use your hands to gently rub the surface of the leaves.
 - Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel.
 - If the label on a leafy greens package says “ready to eat,” “triple washed,” or “no washing necessary,” you don’t need to wash the greens.
- **Separate** leafy greens from raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- **Refrigerate** leafy greens within 2 hours. Refrigerate within 1 hour if they have been exposed to temperatures above 90°F (such as a hot car or picnic).

Investigation Details

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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) investigated a multistate outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections.

Epidemiologic and traceback data showed that Simple Truth Organic brand and Nature’s Basket brand Organic Power Greens made people sick.

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Epidemiologic and Traceback Data

A total of 10 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 were reported from four states. The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely much higher than the number reported, and the outbreak may not have been limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because many people recover without medical care and are not tested for *E. coli*.

Illnesses started on dates ranging from November 27, 2021, to December 9, 2021. Sick people ranged in age from 26 to 79 years, with a median age of 59, and 100% were female. Of 10 people with information available, 4 were hospitalized and 2 developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). One death was reported from Washington.

State and local public health officials interviewed people about the foods they ate in the week before they got sick. Nine people reported eating Organic Power Greens sold under the Simple Truth Organic brand (8) and the Nature's Basket brand (1), and seven people's shopper records showed the purchase of these products. Both brands of Organic Power Greens have the same mix of leafy greens: organic spinach, mizuna, kale, and chard.

FDA conducted a traceback investigation and identified farms from the Yuma, AZ and Salinas, CA growing regions that supplied the Organic Power Greens. However, FDA did not identify a single production code in their traceback.

Laboratory Data

Public health investigators used the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that were part of this outbreak. CDC PulseNet manages a national database of DNA fingerprints of bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses. DNA fingerprinting is performed on bacteria using a method called [whole genome sequencing \(WGS\)](#).

WGS showed that bacteria from sick people's samples were closely related genetically. This suggests that people in this outbreak got sick from the same food.

WGS of bacteria from 10 people's samples predicted resistance to chloramphenicol, streptomycin, sulfisoxazole, tetracycline, and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole. Testing of three people's samples using standard [antibiotic susceptibility testing](#) methods by CDC's [National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System \(NARMS\)](#) confirmed these results (streptomycin was not

tested by this method). These findings do not affect treatment guidance since antibiotics are not recommended for patients with *E. coli* O157:H7 infections.

WGS also showed that this outbreak strain is similar to strains that have previously caused outbreaks linked to consumption of [romaine lettuce](#), contact with lambs, and exposure to recreational water.

Public Health Actions

On December 30, 2021, CDC advised not to eat Simple Truth Organic Power Greens and Nature's Basket Organic Power Greens with "best if used by" dates through December 20, 2021.