

E. coli Outbreak with Unknown Food Source



Investigation Notice

Posted August 19, 2022

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 37
- Hospitalizations: 10
- Deaths: 0
- [States](#): 4
- Recall: No
- Investigation status: Active

Update on Source

A specific food has not yet been confirmed as the source of this outbreak, but many sick people reported eating sandwiches with romaine lettuce at Wendy's restaurants in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania before getting sick. Based on this information, Wendy's is taking the precautionary measure of removing the romaine lettuce being used in sandwiches from restaurants in that region. Wendy's uses a different type of romaine lettuce for salads. Investigators are working to confirm whether romaine lettuce is the source of this outbreak, and whether romaine lettuce used in Wendy's sandwiches was served or sold at other businesses. Wendy's is fully cooperating with the investigation.

What You Should Do

CDC is *not* advising that people avoid eating at Wendy's restaurants or that people stop eating romaine lettuce.

- Wendy's is taking the precautionary measure of removing the romaine lettuce being used in sandwiches from restaurants in this region.

- At this time, there is no evidence to indicate that romaine lettuce sold in grocery stores, served in other restaurants, or in people's homes is linked to this outbreak.
- CDC will update this advice if the investigation identifies foods to avoid.

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these severe *E. coli* symptoms:

- Diarrhea and a fever higher than 102°F
- Diarrhea for more than 3 days that is not improving
- Bloody diarrhea
- So much vomiting that you cannot keep liquids down
- Signs of dehydration, such as:
 - Not peeing much
 - Dry mouth and throat
 - Feeling dizzy when standing up

If you have symptoms of *E. coli* infection, [help public health officials solve this outbreak](#):

- Write down what you ate in the week before you got sick.
- Report your illness to your [local or state health department](#).
- Answer public health officials' questions about your illness.

What Businesses Should Do

- Currently, CDC is not advising businesses to stop selling or serving any foods.

Symptoms of *E. coli*

- Most people infected with Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* experience severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting.
 - Symptoms usually start 3 to 4 days after swallowing the bacteria.
 - Most people recover without treatment within 5 to 7 days.
- Some people may develop a type of kidney failure (hemolytic uremic syndrome, also called HUS) and need to be hospitalized.

Investigation Details

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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) are collecting different types of data to identify the food source of this multistate outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections. A specific food has not yet been confirmed as the source of this outbreak, but many sick people reported eating burgers and sandwiches with romaine lettuce at Wendy's restaurants before getting sick.

Epidemiologic Data

Since the last update on August 17, 2022, eight more illnesses have been reported and two new states have reported illnesses. As of August 18, 2022, a total of 37 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported to CDC from 4 states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from July 26, 2022, to August 8, 2022.

Sick people range in age from 6 to 91 years, with a median age of 21 years, and 62% are male. Of 24 people with information available, ten have been hospitalized. Among the ten people who have been hospitalized, three people in Michigan have developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome. No deaths have been reported.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely higher than the number reported, and the outbreak may not be limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because some of the recent illnesses have not yet been reported to [PulseNet](#) as it usually takes [3 to 4 weeks](#) to determine if a sick person is part of an outbreak. In addition, some people recover without medical care and are not tested for *E. coli*.

State and local public health officials have been interviewing people about the foods they ate in the week before they got sick. Among 26 people who have been interviewed, 22 (86%) reported eating at a Wendy's restaurant in the week before their illness started. The Wendy's restaurants where sick people ate are in Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. People reported eating a variety of menu items, including burgers and sandwiches. Romaine lettuce

served on burgers and sandwiches at Wendy's was one of the most common ingredients eaten among the menu items, but investigators continue to analyze data at the ingredient level to determine if there are any other possible foods that could be the source of the outbreak.

Public Health Actions

Based on the information available, Wendy's is taking the precautionary measure of removing the romaine lettuce being used in sandwiches from restaurants in that region. Wendy's uses a different type of romaine lettuce for salads. Investigators are working to confirm whether romaine lettuce is the source of this outbreak, and whether romaine lettuce used in Wendy's sandwiches was served or sold at other businesses. Wendy's is fully cooperating with the investigation.