

E. coli Outbreak Linked to Ground Beef



Food Safety Alert

Posted October 28, 2022

This outbreak is over. Learn what you can do to protect yourself from getting sick from *E. coli*.

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 7
- Hospitalizations: 6
- Deaths: 0
- [States](#): 6
- Recall: No
- Investigation status: Closed



Example of lot code on left side. Throw away “EST#46841 L1 22 155” or “EST#46841 L5 22 155.”

Contaminated Food

Ground beef in some HelloFresh meal kits shipped from July 2 to July 21, 2022

- Packed in 10-oz. plastic vacuum-packed packages
- Labeled "GROUND BEEF 85% LEAN/15% FAT"
- Has "EST.46841" inside the USDA inspection mark
- Has "EST#46841 L1 22 155" or "EST#46841 L5 22 155" on the side of the packaging

All six people who were interviewed in this outbreak reported eating ground beef from HelloFresh before they got sick.

What You Should Do

Check your freezer for the contaminated ground beef. If you have any left:

- Do not eat it. Throw it away.
- Wash items and surfaces that may have touched the ground beef using hot soapy water or a dishwasher.

Always follow these [four food safety steps](#) to help prevent getting sick from *E. coli*:

- **Clean:** Wash your hands, utensils, and surfaces often. Wash fruits and vegetables before eating, cutting, or peeling.
- **Separate:** Keep food that won't be cooked separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- **Cook:** Use a food thermometer to make sure you have cooked your food to a [temperature high enough to kill germs](#).
- **Chill:** Refrigerate perishable food (food that goes bad) within 2 hours, or within 1 hour if food is exposed to temperatures above 90°F, like a hot car or picnic. Thaw food in the refrigerator, not on the counter.

Investigation Details

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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) investigated a multistate outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections.

Epidemiologic and traceback data showed that ground beef sold in some HelloFresh meal kits made people sick.

As of October 28, 2022, this outbreak is over.

Epidemiologic and Traceback Data

A total of seven people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 were reported from six states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from June 8, 2022, to August 17, 2022.

Sick people ranged in age from 17 to 69 years, with a median age of 25, and 43% were female. Six people were hospitalized and none developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a serious condition that can cause kidney failure. No deaths were reported.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely much higher than the number reported, and this 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*.

State and local public health officials interviewed people about the foods they ate in the week before they got sick. Of the six people interviewed, all six (100%) reported eating ground beef from HelloFresh meal kits.

Traceback conducted by USDA-FSIS identified that multiple sick people received ground beef in HelloFresh meal kits that was produced at establishment M46841.

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 analysis of bacteria from seven people's samples did not predict resistance to any antibiotics. [Standard antimicrobial resistance testing](#) by [CDC's National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System](#) (NARMS) laboratory is currently underway. These findings do not affect treatment guidance since antibiotics are not recommended for patients with *E. coli* O157:H7 infections.

Public Health Actions

CDC is advising people to check their freezer if they froze any of the ground beef in HelloFresh meal kits shipped from July 2 to July 21, 2022. Do not eat the ground beef if it has "EST.46841" inside the USDA inspection mark and "EST#46841 L1 22 155" or "EST#46841 L5 22 155" on the side of the packaging.