

E. coli Outbreak Linked to Ground Beef



Food Safety Alert

Posted September 14, 2022

Fast Facts

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



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 select HelloFresh meal kits shipped from July 2 to July 21, 2022

- The meal kits, which may include contaminated ground beef, were shipped to consumers from July 2 to July 21, 2022.
- The ground beef was packed in 10-oz. plastic vacuum-packed packages inside a variety of HelloFresh meal kits. The beef was labeled "GROUND BEEF 85% LEAN/15% FAT."
- Packages have "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.

All six people who were interviewed in this outbreak reported eating ground beef from HelloFresh before they got sick. Investigators are working to determine if any other ground beef might be contaminated.

What You Should Do

If you received HelloFresh meal kits with ground beef in July and froze any of the ground beef, check your freezer to see if you have this lot of ground beef.

- **Do not eat any of this lot of ground beef.** Throw it away.
- **Wash surfaces and containers** that may have touched the ground beef products using hot and soapy water.
- **Call your healthcare provider** if you have one or more of these severe *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

What Businesses Should Do

- CDC is not advising businesses to take any actions at this time.

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 after 5 to 7 days.
- Some people may develop serious kidney problems (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, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) are collecting [different types of data](#) to investigate a multistate outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections.

Epidemiologic and traceback data show that some ground beef sold in HelloFresh meal kits sent directly to consumers may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7 and have made people sick.

Epidemiologic Data

As of September 12, 2022, seven people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported from six states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from June 8, 2022, to August 17, 2022.

Sick people range in age from 17 to 69 years, with a median age of 25 years, and 57% are male. Of seven people with information available, six have been hospitalized and none developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a serious condition that can cause kidney failure. No deaths have been reported.

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

State and local public health officials are interviewing 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 meal kits received from HelloFresh.

Laboratory and Traceback Data

Public health investigators are using the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that may be 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 are closely related genetically. This means that people in this outbreak likely got sick from the same food.

Traceback conducted by USDA-FSIS identified that multiple sick people received ground beef in HelloFresh meal kits that was produced at establishment M46841. The USDA-FSIS traceback of materials used to produce the ground beef is ongoing.

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 it 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. Investigators are working to determine if additional ground beef products may be contaminated.