

***E. coli* Outbreak Linked to McDonald's Quarter Pounders**

Food safety alert

Investigation start date: October 22, 2024

Investigation status: Open

Recall issued: No

This is a fast-moving outbreak investigation. Most sick people are reporting eating Quarter Pounder hamburgers from McDonald's and investigators are working quickly to confirm which food ingredient is contaminated. McDonald's has pulled ingredients for these burgers, and they won't be available for sale in some states.

Fast Facts

- **Cases:** 49
- **Hospitalizations:** 10
- **Deaths:** 1
- **States:** 10

Situation summary

CDC, FDA, USDA FSIS, and public health officials in multiple states are investigating an outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections. Most people in this outbreak are reporting eating the Quarter Pounder hamburger at McDonald's before becoming sick. It is not yet known which specific food ingredient is contaminated.

McDonald's is collaborating with investigation partners to determine what food ingredient in Quarter Pounders is making people sick. McDonald's stopped using fresh slivered onions and quarter pound beef patties in several states while the investigation is ongoing to identify the ingredient causing illness.

Contaminated food

McDonald's Quarter Pounder hamburgers are making people sick, with most illnesses in Colorado and Nebraska.

- Quarter Pounder hamburgers will not be available temporarily in some states.
- Investigators are working to confirm which ingredient in these hamburgers is making people sick and if it went to other restaurants or stores.
- McDonald's reported to CDC that it has stopped using fresh slivered onions and quarter pound beef patties in several states. McDonald's is proactively making these changes while investigators work to confirm the contaminated ingredient. Quarter pound beef patties are

only used on Quarter Pounders. Fresh slivered onions are primarily used on Quarter Pounder hamburgers and not other menu items.

What you should do

McDonald's has stopped using fresh slivered onions and quarter pound beef patties in several states to protect their customers while a source of illness is confirmed.

Call your healthcare provider if you ate a McDonald's Quarter Pounder hamburger and have 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

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 would need to be hospitalized.

Investigation Update: *E. coli* Outbreak, McDonald's Quarter Pounders - October 22, 2024

Key points This is a fast-moving outbreak investigation. Most sick people are reporting eating Quarter Pounder hamburgers from McDonald's and investigators are working quickly to confirm which food ingredient is contaminated. McDonald's has pulled ingredients for these burgers, and they won't be available for sale in some states.

October 22, 2024

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 investigate a multistate outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections.

Epidemiologic data show that Quarter Pounder hamburgers served at McDonald's are contaminated with *E. coli* and are making people sick. Early information from FDA indicates onions may be a source of this outbreak. Investigators from all agencies are working quickly to determine the contaminated ingredient.

Epidemiologic data

As of October 22, 49 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported from 10 states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from Sept 27, 2024, to October 11, 2024. Of 28 people with information available, 10 have been hospitalized, and 1 person developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a serious condition that can cause kidney failure. One death has been reported from an older adult in Colorado. This is not the same person with HUS.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely much 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.

Public health officials collect many different types of information from sick people, including their age, race, ethnicity, other demographics, and the foods they ate in the week before they got sick. This information provides clues to help investigators identify the source of the outbreak.

The table below has information about sick people in this outbreak ("n" is the number of people with information available for each demographic).

Demographics

Information

Age

(n=49)

Range from 13 to 88 years

Median age of 26

Sex

(n=49)

37% female

63% male

Race

(n=29)

93% White

7% African American/Black

0% Native American or Alaska Native

0% Asian

0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

0% reported more than one race

Ethnicity

(n=25)

100% non-Hispanic

0% Hispanic

State and local public health officials are interviewing people about the foods they ate in the week before they got sick. Of the 18 people interviewed, all 18 (100%) report eating at McDonald's, and 16 people report eating a beef hamburger. Of 14 people who remember the specific beef hamburger they ate at McDonald's, 12 (86%) report eating a Quarter Pounder hamburger. Some people in this outbreak reported traveling to other states before their illness started. At least one person ate at McDonald's during their travel.

Traceback Information

Investigators are working to determine if the slivered onions or beef patties in Quarter Pounder burgers are the specific source of this outbreak.

Preliminary traceback and distribution information reviewed by FDA shows that slivered onions served on Quarter Pounders are a likely source of contamination. FDA is working quickly to confirm that these onions are a source of this outbreak and to determine if these onions were served or sold at other businesses.

FSIS is conducting traceback on hamburger patties served at McDonald's to determine if ground beef is a source of illness.

Public health actions

McDonalds has stopped using fresh slivered onions and quarter pound beef patties in several states to protect their customers while a source of illness is confirmed. Quarter Pounders will not be available for sale temporarily in some states. Call your healthcare provider if you ate a McDonald's Quarter Pounder hamburger and have severe *E. coli* symptoms.