

2024 E. Coli Outbreak Linked to Raw Milk Consumption

[Foodborne illness webpage](#) | [Link to all outbreaks](#)

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Overview

In mid-January and early-February 2024, 2 Washington residents in different counties were infected with the same, highly related strain of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* or "STEC." Both drank raw milk produced by Cozy Vale Creamery (Tenino, WA) shortly before becoming ill.

Raw milk is considered a high-risk food for STEC infection because it is not heat treated (pasteurized) to kill germs that can make people sick. STEC bacteria (and other bacteria) can naturally be in cattle manure which can contaminate milk during production.

On February 16, 2024, Cozy Vale Creamery in Tenino, WA announced a recall of raw milk and cream because of contamination with STEC. The STEC bacteria found in the milk was a different strain than the one that caused the two recent illnesses in Washington residents. At this time, there are no known illnesses associated with the strain found in the milk products.

Washington State Case Information

Washington residents from two counties have been included in this outbreak including Grays Harbor (1) and Pierce (1).

Recalled Products

Cozy Vale Creamery raw milk and cream products with best by dates of 2/18/24 through 2/29/24. These products, were bottled in gallon, half-gallon, quart, and pint containers and sold t in Western Washington.

Local health partners visited the retail stores that sold the raw milk and ensured all locations had removed the recalled products from sale.

[Cozy Vale Creamery recall notice, WSDA](#)

The investigation is ongoing, and we may identify additional links to products as we continue to gather information from new cases. DOH will provide updates as the investigation progresses.

Advice to Consumers

- If you have the recalled Cozy Vale Creamery products at home, do not drink or use them and throw them away.
- [*E. coli*](#) infections can cause serious complications. Symptoms include diarrhea, stomach cramps and blood in the stool.
- If you notice symptoms, especially bloody diarrhea, contact your health care provider right away.

Advice to Retailers

- Do not sell or serve the recalled product.
- Wash and sanitize items and surfaces that may have come in contact with these products.

About Shiga toxin producing *E. coli* (STEC)

E. coli bacteria normally live in the intestines of humans and animals. Many strains of *E. coli* bacteria exist, and most of them are harmless or beneficial to human

health. STEC are strains of *E. coli* that produce Shiga toxin (such as *E. coli* O157:H7) and can cause serious illness in people.

Symptoms of *E. coli* Infection

People usually get sick from Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) 2 to 8 days (average of 3 to 4 days) after swallowing the germ. Symptoms often include:

- Severe stomach cramps
- Diarrhea (often bloody)
- Vomiting
- Low grade fever (less than 101°F/38.5°C)

Some people with a STEC infection may get a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). Symptoms of HUS include decreased urine production, dark or tea-colored urine, and losing pink color in cheeks and inside the lower eyelids.

Prevention

- Avoid eating high-risk foods, especially undercooked ground beef, unpasteurized milk or juice, soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk, or sprouts.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure that ground beef has reached a safe internal temperature of 160° F.
- Thoroughly wash fresh produce before eating.
- Wash hands before, during, and after preparing food, after diapering infants, and after contact with cows, sheep, or goats, their food or treats, or their living environment.

Public Health Partners

DOH works closely with [local health jurisdictions](#) to collect data from interviews of sick individuals to help identify common exposures between the [Washington State Department of Agriculture \(WSDA\)](#) and other partner agencies on this type of outbreak investigation.

The investigation process can be long and complex. Only those who are severely ill tend to visit a healthcare provider and get tested, and each step of the process takes time.

Sometimes people don't get sick until several days after they eat food containing *E. coli* bacteria. It can take a lot of time and effort to test samples from people who are ill, interview them for a detailed history of foods they've eaten and look for commonalities between cases.