



Expanded investigation into multi-state *E. coli* infections linked to romaine lettuce

April 20 2018 7:44 PM

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and other state and local health departments, is expanding its investigation of a multi-state cluster of *E. coli* infections to include not only chopped romaine lettuce, but full heads and hearts of romaine lettuce.

Information collected to date indicates that romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region could be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7 and could make people sick. At this time, no common grower, supplier, distributor, or brand has been identified. However, the investigation now not only encompasses chopped romaine lettuce, but all romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona region.

One case linked to the outbreak has been identified in Illinois. To date, 53 other cases have been reported in 16 states with 31 hospitalizations and no deaths. The central Illinois resident reported consuming chopped romaine lettuce before illness onset.

Consumers in Illinois who have store-bought romaine lettuce at home, including salads and salad mixes containing chopped romaine lettuce, should not eat it and should throw it away, even if some of it was eaten and no one has gotten sick.

If you do not know if the lettuce is romaine, do not eat it and throw it away. Before purchasing romaine lettuce at a grocery store or eating it at a restaurant, consumers should confirm with the store or restaurant that it is not romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region. If you cannot confirm the source of the romaine lettuce, do not buy it or eat it.

Restaurants and retailers should not serve or sell any romaine lettuce, including salads and salad mixes containing chopped romaine lettuce, from the Yuma, Arizona growing region.

Restaurants and retailers should ask their suppliers about the source of their chopped romaine lettuce.

People usually get sick from Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* 2 to 8 days after swallowing the germ. Most people infected with *E. coli* develop diarrhea (often bloody), severe stomach cramps, and vomiting. Most people recover within one week although some illnesses can be more severe, resulting in a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS).

Talk to your health care provider if you have symptoms of an *E. coli* infection and report your illness to your local health department. You can also write down what you ate in the week before you started to get sick and talk to public health investigators if they have questions about your illness.