

April 27, 2018

Health Advisory

***Escherichia coli* O157:H7 Infections Associated with the Consumption of Romaine Lettuce – United States****Summary**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to work with state and local health officials investigating a nationwide outbreak of illness due to *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 (*E. coli* O157:H7). This outbreak has been linked to the consumption of romaine lettuce. As of April 27, 98 illnesses have been reported from 22 states with 46 hospitalizations.

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is currently investigating two suspect cases. Confirmation via whole genome sequencing is pending.

**Facts about Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) Infections**

- Infections can occur through the ingestion of contaminated food or water or through contact with infected animals or people.
- Transmission is through the fecal-oral route.
- Symptoms may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, fever, nausea and vomiting.
- Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) is associated with this infection. Younger children, older adults and others with underlying health conditions are at higher risk for HUS.
- Antimicrobial therapy for people with infections attributed to *E. coli* O157 and other STEC that produce Shiga toxin 2 may increase the risk of HUS and should be avoided.
- The incubation period ranges from one to eight days, but is typically three to four days.

**Recommendations**

- Screen patients who present with diarrhea or bloody diarrhea for enteric pathogens, including STEC.
- Laboratories isolating STEC by culture should send isolates to the NDDoH Division of Microbiology.
- Laboratories conducting non-culture testing for STEC should send leftover specimen from those that test positive to the NDDoH Division of Microbiology.
- Most experts advise not to treat STEC infections with antibiotics (AAP, Red Book, 30 ed. p 346).
- Infected children who attend child care should be excluded from child care until two negative cultures are obtained. Specimens should be collected at least 24 hours apart and not earlier than 48 hours after completion of antibiotics.
- Infected food handlers should be excluded from work until reinstatement is approved by the regulatory authority and two negative cultures are obtained or the worker has been asymptomatic for seven days. Specimens should be collected at least 24 hours apart and not earlier than 48 hours after completion of antibiotics.
- Infected people should practice good hand hygiene, especially after using the bathroom.
- Report suspected cases to the NDDoH, including any similar cases encountered since February 1, 2018. Reports can be made by calling 701.328.2378 or 1.800.472.2180. Reports can also be made online at [www.ndhealth.gov/Disease/Disease%20Reporting](http://www.ndhealth.gov/Disease/Disease%20Reporting).
- For more information about laboratory testing or specimen shipping, please call 701.328.6272.

### More Information on this Advisory

- More information on the outbreak is available from the CDC at: [www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/index.html)

Additional guidance for healthcare providers can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/clinicians.html>

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**Health Advisory** May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation

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##This message was distributed to state and local health officers, state and local epidemiologists, state and local laboratory directors, public information officers, HAN coordinators, and clinician organizations##