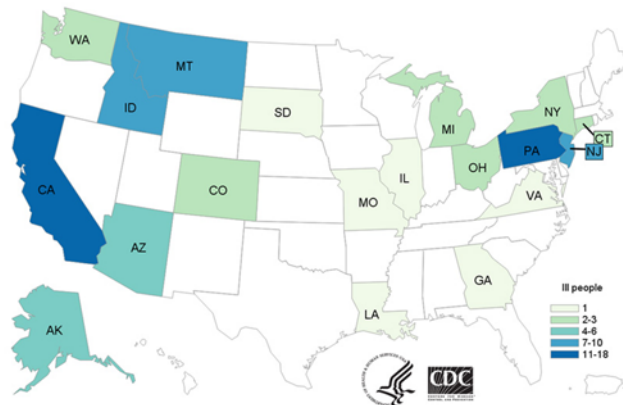


Daily Union Article
Saturday, April 28, 2018
Title: *E. Coli* Food Safety Alert

Case Count Maps

Posted April 25, 2018 2:30 PM EST

People infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7, by state of residence, as of April 24, 2018 (n=84)



The Centers for Disease Control recently released advice for consumers in regards to the widespread recall of romaine lettuce grown in the Yuma, Arizona growing region:

- ◆ Do not buy or eat romaine lettuce at a grocery store or restaurant unless you can confirm it is not romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona, growing region.
- ◆ Unless the source of the product is known, consumers anywhere in the United States who have any store-bought romaine lettuce at home should not eat it and should throw it away, even if some of it was eaten and no one has gotten sick. **This includes whole heads and hearts of romaine, chopped romaine, and salads and salad mixes containing romaine lettuce.** If you do not know if the lettuce is romaine, do not eat it and throw it away.
- ⇒ Product labels often do not identify growing regions; so, throw out any romaine lettuce if you're uncertain about where it was grown.
- ⇒ Wash and sanitize drawers or shelves in refrigerators where romaine lettuce was stored.

The CDC also recommends five steps to clean your refrigerator following any food recall:

Items needed to clean your refrigerator:

- Sealed Bags
- Warm, Soapy Water
- Clean Towels
- Optional: Water + Bleach

STEP 1 – Throw out recalled food

- Throw out the recalled food, and any other foods stored with it or touching it.
- Put it in a sealed bag in the garbage.
- If the recalled food was stored in a reusable container, wash it with warm, soapy water before reusing.

STEP 2 – Empty your Refrigerator

- Empty the rest of the items in your refrigerator and put them on a counter or table while you clean.
- Take out shelving, drawers, and any other removable parts.
- Don't leave unrefrigerated food out for more than two hours.

STEP 3 – Wash Removable Parts

- Wash shelving, drawers, and any other removable parts by hand with warm, soapy water.
- Dry with a clean towel.

- Don't run cold glass shelves or drawers under hot water – the glass could crack. Let them come to room temperature first.

STEP 4 – Clean and Sanitize Inside the Refrigerator

- Wipe the inside of the empty refrigerator with warm, soapy water, then wipe with clean water to rinse off soap.
- Dry with a clean towel.
- Don't forget to wipe inside the doors and any drawers that cannot be removed

*** Optional Step**

Use a solution of 1 tablespoon of liquid bleach in 1 gallon of water to sanitize your refrigerator. Do this after cleaning it with warm, soapy water.

STEP 5 – Return Shelves, Drawers, and Food

- Put the shelves, drawers, and other removable parts back in the refrigerator, along with the other items you took out.
- Wipe food and drink containers with warm, soapy water before returning to the clean refrigerator.

And don't forget!

Wash your hands with warm water and soap once you've finished!

E. coli are bacteria that can be found in our natural environment, in foods we eat, and even in the intestines of people and animals. Some *E. coli* are harmless and contribute to a healthy digestive system while others can cause diarrhea, urinary tract infections, respiratory illness, bloodstream infections, and other serious illnesses. These harmful *E. coli* bacteria can be transferred in a variety of ways:

- In food and water
- Contact with animals carrying the harmful bacteria
- Other humans infected with the harmful bacteria

Throwing away potentially contaminated food in a plastic bag and sanitizing and cleaning your kitchen takes prevention on extra step. It can reduce your risk by wiping out the potential of contamination by contact (before ingestion.)

The CDC has identified this outbreak in 19 states. Of the 84 people who have been reported with this outbreak, half (42) have been hospitalized. As of April 25, there have been no deaths.

Symptoms show up 2-8 days after being infected and include:

- Diarrhea
- Severe stomach cramps
- Vomiting

Recovery time is typically within one week. By being aware of the symptoms, you can seek treatment sooner rather than later. If you are uncertain if the lettuce you have in your refrigerator is included in the potentially contaminated romaine lettuce, tossing it in the trash would be safer than risking illness. For more information about this *E. coli* outbreak, go to the CDC website: www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018. Staying informed can help keep you healthy!

For more information of food safety awareness and practices, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!