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IN THE NEWS

E. Coli O157:H7 in Lettuce Update as of May 1, 2018

The last update from the CDC on the E. Coli contamination of Romaine Lettuce was 4/28/18 and contained an update of cases and states, as well as important info related to avoiding risk of infection to contaminated lettuce.

To date, there are 98 cases of E Coli O157:H7 in 22 states with 46 hospitalizations, 10 cases of hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), and no deaths. Since there is a 2-3-week lag time between infection of an individual to when the case is reported, these numbers do not include any cases after April 7.

As reported in the last E Coli update on the FirstWatch website, the CDC widened their recommendations to **NOT BUY OR EAT ANY ROMAINE LETTUCE UNLESS YOU CONFIRM THAT IT IS NOT FROM THE YUMA, ARIZONA GROWING REGION. This includes whole heads, hearts of romaine, chopped, baby, organic, and salads or mixes of greens that you can't confirm don't have Romaine lettuce, and any purchased at restaurants.** Labels often do not indicate the area where the product was grown but will have labels of suppliers or distributors, so avoid the product unless you can confirm **where it was grown.** *Consumer Reports* still recommends against eating romaine lettuce from anywhere in the U.S.

It is worth noting that washing greens or other raw vegetables and fruits, even if using commercially prepared washes, baking soda, vinegar, or bleach is not reliable for killing E. Coli and other pathogens. Washing them with a cleansing agent (as above) with friction like a brush or cloth will remove pesticide residue, dirt, and other debris but pathogens (which are microscopic) can hide in crevices, cuts or blemishes on the vegetable/fruit, or even be covered with a biological film, produced by some bacteria, to assist in protecting the pathogen and resisting being washed or rubbed off. E. Coli is killed by adequate heating but sub-kill temperatures may actually be a signal for the bacteria to trigger a protective measure to make it more resistant to heat and most people like their salad fixins' raw,

The good news is that the growing season of the Yuma region is typically done at the end of March, so cases of infection should decrease until completely gone. However, remember that there will be several weeks after the produce is picked before it isn't in a refrigerator or shelf somewhere. Confirm where romaine lettuce is from until the CDC/FDA gives the OK.

Although 22 states have recorded cases, all the states except the following, have only 1-3 cases each. Those with more than 3 cases include Alaska (8), Arizona (5), California (16), Idaho (10), Montana (8), New Jersey (7), Pennsylvania (18), and Washington (5).

For a map of affected states and case counts by state see:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/map.html>

For a summary of information about E. Coli symptoms, HUS, and incubations periods, check the FirstWatch HIP for the 4/15/18 Outbreak Announcement or find more complete info on the website links below.

For more details on E Coli and this outbreak, please see the links to the CDC and FDA:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/index.html>

<https://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm604254.htm>

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