



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

HEALTH ALERT

Food Safety Alert: Romaine Lettuce

Date: November 25, 2019

To: Healthcare providers, pharmacies

From: Martin Fenstersheib, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer

Subject: *E. coli* 0157:H7 outbreak linked to romaine lettuce

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state authorities, continue to investigate a multistate outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections associated with consumption of romaine lettuce in the U.S. As of Nov. 22, 2019 this outbreak has resulted in 40 people becoming ill in 16 states, including 4 people in California. The outbreak infections are linked to romaine lettuce from the Salinas, California, growing region which includes Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advise the public **not to eat romaine lettuce harvested from the Salinas, California, growing region.** Also, retailers and restaurants are not to serve or sell romaine lettuce harvested from the Salinas, California, growing region. Romaine lettuce products are labeled with a harvest location by region. If the romaine lettuce bag or box is not labeled with a harvest growing region, do not buy, serve, sell, or eat it.

E. coli 0157:H7 is a strain of *E. coli* bacteria which can cause significant intestinal infection and can be associated with food and water-borne outbreaks. Symptoms usually appear 2-8 days after eating contaminated food and may include: severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), vomiting and sometimes fever (usually not very high). Most people get better within 5–7 days. Some infections are very mild, but others are severe or even life-threatening.

About 5 to 10% of people who are diagnosed with *E. coli* 0157:H7 infection, develop a potentially life-threatening complication known as hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). HUS develops about 7 days after symptoms first appear, when diarrhea is improving. Clues that someone is developing HUS include decreased frequency of urination, feeling very tired, and losing pink color in cheeks and inside the lower eyelids. People with HUS should be hospitalized because their kidneys may stop working and they may develop other serious problems. Most people with HUS recover within a few weeks, but some suffer permanent damage or die.

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Antibiotics are not recommended for patients with E. coli 0157 infections. Antibiotics are also not recommended for patients in whom E. coli 0157 infection is suspected, until diagnostic testing rules out this infection. Some studies have shown that administering antibiotics to patients with E.coli 0157 infections might increase their risk of developing HUS and the benefit of antibiotic treatment has not been clearly demonstrated.

Additional information from the FDA on this outbreak can be found at:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne-illness/outbreak-investigation-illnesses-caused-e-coli-o157h7-november-2019>

Additional information from the CDC on this outbreak can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2019/o157h7-11-19/index.html>

For more information or updates on this topic, please call Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367 or go to San Benito Public Health Services website: <http://hhsa.cosb.us/publichealth/>

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Health Alert: Warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

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