**E. coli O157:H7 infections in the US and Canada**

**Date:** 29 December 2017  
**Source:** CDC, Public Health Agency of Canada

The CDC, several US states, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are investigating a multistate outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* O157:H7 infections (STEC O157:H7) in 13 US states. The Public Health Agency of Canada is investigating a similar outbreak in several of its provinces.


Preliminary results show that the type of *E. coli* making people sick in both countries is genetically closely related, meaning the infected individuals are more likely to share a common source of infection. The Public Health Agency of Canada has identified romaine lettuce as the source of the outbreak in Canada. The CDC is still collecting information to determine whether in the US, a food item is also in common among the ill (including leafy greens and romaine).

**Comment**

*E. coli* infection can be acquired by anyone, but special populations including pregnant women, the immunodepressed, younger children and the elderly, can develop severe complications following *E. coli* infection, especially with the O157 strain.

Symptoms can range from no sickness at all to nausea, vomiting, headache, mild fever, stomach cramps, watery or bloody diarrhea. In most patients, symptoms end within 5 to 10 days, but some patients may have a more serious illness requiring hospital admission. In rare cases, life-threatening symptoms, including stroke, renal failure and seizures which could result in death, may develop.

Treatment is symptomatic and includes hydration and nutrition. In patients with renal failure, dialysis could be required. Physicians should be aware of this disease in visitors from US with the above-described symptoms.

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