

Multistate Outbreak of **E. coli 0157:H7** Infections Could Be Linked To Romaine Lettuce



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Starting in November of 2017, reports began surfacing about a new outbreak of food-borne illness in parts of the United States and Canada. In the ensuing two months, more than fifty people across North America have become ill from a dangerous strain of *E. coli* bacteria. Canadian health officials believe the cause may be romaine lettuce infected with a virulent strain of E Coli bacteria.

In the United States, [the infections](#) have produced seventeen reported cases across 13 states: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Vermont, and Washington State. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), five people in the U.S. have been hospitalized and one has died, Canadian health officials recently confirmed one death in Canada from the tainted lettuce.

CDC recently issued a [press release](#) confirming that it and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are investigating a multistate outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *E.*

[coli O157:H7](#) infections (STEC O157:H7) in 13 states. The [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) also is investigating an outbreak of STEC O157:H7 infections in several provinces.

Whole genome sequencing is being performed on samples of bacteria making people sick in the United States to confirm whether these illnesses are related to the illnesses in Canada. Preliminary results show that the type of *E. coli* making people sick in both countries is closely related genetically. The Public Health Agency of Canada has identified romaine lettuce as the source of the outbreak in Canada. In the United States, state and local public health officials are [interviewing sick people](#) to determine what they ate in the week before their illness started. CDC is still collecting information to determine whether there is a food item in common among sick people, including leafy greens and romaine.

Because it has not identified a source of the infections, CDC is unable to recommend whether U.S. residents should avoid a particular food. However, several media sites [Consumer Reports](#), are recommending that romaine lettuce be avoided for the near term, until more complete analyses become available.