

Outbreak of *E. coli* Infections Linked to Ground Beef



Food Safety Alert

May 13, 2019 at 11:00 AM ET

CDC, several states, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service are investigating a multistate outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* O103 infections linked to ground beef.

Recalls and Advice to Consumers and Retailers

At A Glance

- [Reported Cases](#): 196
- [States](#): 10
- Hospitalizations: 28
- Deaths: 0

Ill people in this outbreak ate ground beef from many sources. Some ground beef has been recalled, but more product contaminated with *E. coli* O103 may still be on the market or in freezers.

Restaurants, retailers, and institutions should not sell or serve the following recalled ground beef products because they may be contaminated with *E. coli* O103 and could make people sick:

Grant Park Packing in Franklin Park, Ill., recalled approximately 53,200 pounds of raw ground beef products on April 24, 2019.

- Recalled products were sold in 40-lb. bulk cardboard boxes of "North Star Imports & Sales, LLC. 100% GROUND BEEF BULK 80% LEAN/ 20% FAT" marked "FOR INSTITUTIONAL USE ONLY" with lot code GP.1051.18 and pack dates 10/30/2018, 10/31/2018, and 11/01/2018.
- Recalled products are labeled with establishment number "EST. 21781" inside the USDA mark of inspection on the boxes.

K2D Foods, doing business as Colorado Premium Foods, in Carrollton, Ga., recalled approximately 113,424 pounds of raw ground beef products on April 23, 2019.

- Recalled products were sold in two 24-lb. vacuum-packed packages in cardboard boxes containing raw “GROUND BEEF PUCK” with “Use Thru” dates of 4/14/19, 4/17/19, 4/20/19, 4/23/19, 4/28/19, and 4/30/19.
- Recalled products are labeled with establishment number “EST. 51308” inside the USDA mark of inspection.

Investigators continue to trace other sources for ground beef eaten by ill people in this outbreak, and more product contaminated with *E. coli* O103 may be recalled.

Consumers and restaurants should always [handle and cook ground beef safely](#) to avoid foodborne illness. Thoroughly cook ground beef to an internal temperature of 160°F to kill germs. Cook casseroles containing ground beef to 165°F. Never eat, serve, or sell recalled ground beef.

Wash hands with soap and water after touching raw ground beef. Use hot, soapy water or a [bleach solution](#) to wash kitchen items that touched raw meat.

- **Handling ground beef:**
 - Keep raw meat separate from foods that won’t be cooked before eating.
 - Wash hands with soap and water after touching raw meat and before touching other kitchen items.
 - Thoroughly wash countertops, cutting boards, plates, and utensils with hot, soapy water or a [bleach solution](#) after they touch raw meat to avoid contaminating other foods and items in your kitchen.
- **Cooking ground beef:**
 - Don’t eat raw or undercooked ground beef.
 - Cook ground beef hamburgers and mixtures such as meatloaf to an internal temperature of 160°F. Use a food thermometer to make sure the meat has reached a safe internal temperature. You can’t tell whether meat is safely cooked by looking at it.
 - For [hamburgers](#), insert thermometer through the side of the patty until it reaches the middle.
 - For foods like meatloaf place the thermometer in the thickest part of the meat.
 - For casseroles and for sauces that contain ground beef, such as spaghetti sauce or sloppy joe, check the temperature in several places. Casseroles should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F.
 - After cooking ground beef, refrigerate within 2 hours and use within 3 to 4 days.
 - When ordering at a restaurant, ask that ground beef hamburgers and mixtures be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160°F.
- **Storing ground beef:**
 - Refrigerate or freeze raw ground beef within two hours after purchase.
 - If you refrigerate raw ground beef, use within 1 or 2 days.
 - Store ground beef in a plastic bag on the lowest shelf of your refrigerator.
 - If you break large packages of ground beef into smaller packages for freezing:

- Wash hands with soap and water after touching the meat or its packaging, and before touching other surfaces.
 - Use hot, soapy water to clean the area where you divided the ground beef, including kitchen counters and utensils.
 - Label your packages with the date they were placed in the freezer and where you purchased the ground beef.
- **Thawing ground beef:**
 - The best way to safely thaw ground beef is in the refrigerator. Cook or refreeze within 1 or 2 days.
 - After thawing raw ground beef in the refrigerator, cook it before refreezing.

For more information about how to handle ground beef safely, call the [USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline](#) at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854).

[Take action](#) if you have symptoms of an *E. coli* infection:

- Talk to your healthcare provider.
- Write down what you ate in the week before you started to get sick.
- Report your illness to the health department.
- Assist public health investigators by answering questions about your illness.

Latest Outbreak Information

- A total of 196 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O103 have been reported from 10 states.
 - Twenty-eight people have been hospitalized. Two cases of hemolytic uremic syndrome, a type of kidney failure, have been reported. No deaths have been reported.
- [Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence](#) indicates that ground beef is the likely source of this outbreak.
 - Ill people in this outbreak report eating ground beef at home and in restaurants.
 - Laboratory testing identified the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O103 in a sample of ground beef collected from a location where ill people reported eating in Tennessee.
 - Traceback investigations are ongoing to determine the source of ground beef supplied to grocery stores and other locations where ill people reported eating.
- Two companies have recalled ground beef products that were sold to restaurants and institutions because they may be contaminated with *E. coli* O103.
 - At this time, no common supplier, distributor, or brand of ground beef has been identified that could account for the whole outbreak. Other products may be recalled.
- Restaurants, retailers, and institutions should not sell or serve recalled ground beef.
- CDC recommends that consumers and restaurants always handle ground beef safely and cook it thoroughly to avoid foodborne illness.
- CDC will provide updates as more information becomes available.

Symptoms of *E. coli* Infection

- People usually get sick from Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) 3–4 days after swallowing the germ.
- Symptoms often include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting, and usually lasts 5-7 days.
- Some people with a STEC infection may get a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome.
- For more information, see [Symptoms of *E. coli* Infection](#).

Advice to Clinicians

Antibiotics are not recommended for patients with suspected *E. coli* infections until diagnostic testing can be performed and *E. coli* infection is ruled out. Some studies have shown that administering antibiotics to patients with *E. coli* infections might increase their risk of developing HUS, and a benefit of treatment has not been clearly demonstrated.

Investigation Details

May 13, 2019

Since the last update on April 26, 2019, 19 more ill people were added to this outbreak.

As of May 13, 2019, 196 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O103 have been reported from 10 states. CDC is reporting the 196 illnesses that the [PulseNet](#) laboratory network has confirmed are part of this outbreak. States are investigating additional illnesses that might be a part of this outbreak. A list of the states and the number of confirmed cases in each can be found on the [Map of Reported Cases page](#).

Illnesses started on dates from [March 1, 2019, to April 19, 2019](#). Ill people range in age from less than 1 year to 84 years, with a median age of 19. Fifty-two percent are female. Of 174 people with information available, 28 (16%) have been hospitalized. No deaths and two cases of hemolytic uremic syndrome have been reported.

Illnesses that occurred after March 21, 2019, might not yet be reported due to the time it takes between when a person becomes ill with *E. coli* and when the illness is reported. This takes an average of [two to three weeks](#).

Investigation of the Outbreak

This multistate investigation began on March 28, 2019, when officials in Kentucky and Georgia notified CDC of this outbreak. [Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence](#) indicates that ground beef is the likely source of this outbreak.

In interviews, ill people answered [questions about the foods they ate and other exposures](#) in the week before they became ill. Of the 147 people interviewed, 115 (78%) reported eating ground

beef. This percentage is significantly higher than results from a survey of healthy people. Ill people bought or ate ground beef from several different grocery stores and restaurants. Many ill people bought large trays or chubs of ground beef from grocery stores and used the meat to make dishes like spaghetti sauce and sloppy joe.

Officials in Tennessee collected ground beef from a restaurant where ill people reported eating. Laboratory testing identified the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O103 in the ground beef collected in Tennessee.

Two companies recalled raw ground beef products because they may be contaminated with *E. coli*. Grant Park Packing in Franklin Park, Ill., recalled approximately 53,200 pounds of raw ground beef products on April 24, 2019. K2D Foods, doing business as Colorado Premium Foods, in Carrollton, Ga., recalled approximately 113,424 pounds of raw ground beef products on April 23, 2019. These products were sold to restaurants and institutions.

USDA-FSIS and state regulatory officials continue to collect products for testing and continue their traceback investigations to determine the source of ground beef supplied to grocery stores and restaurants where ill people ate. At this time, no common supplier, distributor, or brand of ground beef has been identified that could account for the whole outbreak. Consumers should handle ground beef safely and cook it thoroughly.

CDC will provide more information as it becomes available.