

NJLINCS Health Alert Network
Public Health Update

Distributed by the New Jersey Department of Health

Subject: Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) Update: Information for Clinicians, Laboratorians and Local Health Department Investigators

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The New Jersey Department of Health has been working with The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), several other states, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service, in the investigation of a multistate outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing E. coli O157:H7 infections. As of April 20, 2018, 53 people infected with the outbreak strain of E. coli O157:H7 have been reported from 16 states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from March 13, 2018 to April 6, 2018 with an age range of 10yrs. to 85 years, with a median age of 34 yrs. Seventy percent of ill people are female. Thirty-one ill people have been hospitalized, including five people who developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a type of kidney failure. No deaths have been reported. Forty-one (95%) of 43 people interviewed reported consuming romaine lettuce in the week before their illness started. NJ has 7 cases associated with this outbreak with illnesses onset dates ranging from March 15, 2018 to March 26, 2018, with an age range of 18yrs. to 84 years and a median age of 46 yrs. Eighty-five percent of ill people are female and six have been hospitalized, including one who developed hemolytic uremic syndrome. All six who were hospitalized have been discharged. All cases were interviewed and available exposures have been shared with CDC. Based on new information, CDC is expanding its warning to consumers to cover all types of romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region. This warning now includes whole heads and hearts of romaine lettuce, in addition to chopped romaine and salads and salad mixes containing romaine. Unless the source of the product is known, consumers anywhere in the United States who have any store-bought romaine lettuce at home should not eat it and should throw it away, even if some of it was eaten and no one has gotten sick. Product labels often do not identify growing regions: so, any romaine lettuce where growing region cannot be ascertained should be thrown out. This includes whole heads and hearts of romaine, chopped romaine, and salads and salad mixes containing romaine lettuce. If the type of lettuce is unknown, it should not be eaten and should be thrown away.

The CDC web posting can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/index.html>

The FDA web posting can be found at:

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

Attached please find updated:

1. Advice for Key points for clinicians, laboratorians and public health professionals (STEC_LINCS Message_Clinicians_Labs_LHDs.pdf)
2. General talking points (STEC_Talking Points.pdf)
3. Phone script for public callers (STEC_Phone script_public callers.pdf)

This investigation is ongoing, and more information will be released as it becomes available, but the attached talking points and phone script is intended to serve as a

guide to the LHDs to ensure consistent messaging as this investigation evolves. We encourage all local health departments to coordinate their public messaging with NJDOH.

Please contact Deepam Thomas, Foodborne Disease Surveillance Coordinator (deepam.thomas@doh.nj.gov) or The Communicable Disease Service at (609) 826-5964 during business hours with questions.