



**UPDATE: MULTISTATE E.COLI OUTBREAK FROM FRESH SPINACH**

**TO: West Virginia Local Health Departments; Health Care Providers; Health Care Facilities; and Hospital, Commercial, and Reference Laboratories**

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**LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO HOSPITAL, COMMERCIAL AND REFERENCE LABORATORIES AND TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

**OTHER RECIPIENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.**

Nationwide, as of September 26, 2006, there have been 183 cases of illness due to E.Coli 0157:H7 infection reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including 29 cases of Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS), 95 hospitalizations and one death. Fresh spinach has been confirmed as the source of this multi-state outbreak. There is one confirmed case in West Virginia linked to this outbreak.

Further laboratory testing of the implicated spinach lots has identified additional serotypes (non 0157), which also may be associated with this outbreak. If screening of samples is shiga toxin positive, but 0157 is not isolated, further testing needs to be conducted to rule out these additional isolates. For questions and information regarding testing, please contact the Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) at 304-558-3530. Testing is available at OLS and they can accept isolates on agar as well as broth specimens. Additionally, in accordance with the Communicable Disease Rule 64CSR7, please forward all shiga toxin positive isolates to OLS for serotype analysis.

Continue to report all possible E.Coli infections to your local health department as soon as possible.

**Symptoms**

The symptoms of *E. coli* O157:H7 include severe bloody diarrhea and stomach cramping with little or no fever. Symptoms begin 2 to 8 days after exposure and last for approximately 5 to 10 days. Some people may have only mild diarrhea without blood or no symptoms at all.

Most people recover without medical treatment in 5 to 10 days. In some persons, especially children under 5 years of age and the elderly, infection with *E. coli* O157:H7 can result in hemolytic uremic syndrome, or “HUS.” This complication is very serious and can lead to kidney failure and death. HUS is a life-threatening complication and requires hospitalization and extensive medical care. Blood transfusions and kidney dialysis are often required. HUS occurs in about 2% to 7% of persons with *E. coli* O157:H7.

Anyone with diarrhea (especially young children) lasting for more than a day or with severe symptoms such as high fever, severe cramping or signs of dehydration should contact their doctor. The use of antibiotics or over-the-counter anti-diarrheal agents is NOT recommended.

### Prevention Guidelines:

- **Always wash hands with soap and water:**
  - after using the bathroom,
  - after changing diapers,
  - after cleaning the toilet,
  - after handling soiled towels or linens,
  - before eating, and
  - after petting or handling animals.
- Drink only pasteurized milk products, fruit juices, and cider.
- Eat only fruits and vegetables that have been well washed.
- Thoroughly cook all ground meat.

Additional information regarding reporting and public FAQ sheets can be found at:  
<http://www.wvdhhr.org/idep/a-z/a-z-ecoli.asp>

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to Local Health Departments and Professional Societies. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information to the targeted audiences noted.

**Categories of Health Alert messages:**

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance, warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** Provides important 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.