

Ohio Department of Health

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N E W S

Office of Public Affairs
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ODH, LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS, PROBING INCREASED *E. COLI* CASES

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH), along with local health officials in five counties, are investigating 16 cases of *E. coli* O157:H7.

Of Ohio's 16 cases, 10 are linked by genetic fingerprinting and public health investigators are working with clients to examine whether a common source of infection can be found. This genetic fingerprint also matches cases in Michigan. This could suggest a common source, but health officials do not have enough information to draw that conclusion.

ODH is working with colleagues in Delaware (one confirmed), Fairfield (three confirmed; one probable), Franklin (four confirmed; five probable), Lucas (one confirmed) and Seneca (one confirmed) counties, the State of Michigan and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to better understand the cause of these illnesses.

“We urge Ohioans to take steps to protect themselves against *E. coli* O157:H7 infection, not only now, but always,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. “Ohio averages about 140 cases annually and prevention is of key importance to avoiding this serious infection.”

To protect yourself: Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom or changing diapers, before and after eating or preparing food and after touching animals; use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available. Cook ground beef to 160° F. Test the meat by putting a food thermometer in the thickest part of the meat. Wash the thermometer after each use. Don't eat ground beef that is pink in the middle. If a restaurant serves you an undercooked hamburger, send it back for more cooking. Ask for a new bun and a clean plate, too.

Don't spread bacteria in your kitchen. Keep raw meat away from other foods. Wash your hands, cutting board, counter, dishes and silverware with hot soapy water after they touch raw meat, spinach, greens or sprouts. Never put cooked hamburgers or meat on the plate they were on before cooking. Drink only pasteurized milk, juice or cider. Frozen juice or juice sold in boxes and glass jars at room temperature has been pasteurized, although it may not say so on the label. Drink water from safe sources such as municipal water that has been treated with chlorine, wells that have been tested or bottled water. Wash all fruits and vegetables prior to eating them. Do not swallow lake or pool water while swimming.

People with *E. coli* O157:H7 typically have diarrhea, which can be bloody and severe, and abdominal cramps two to eight days after infection. People with these symptoms should see their physicians.

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