



555 Towner St., P.O. Box 0915  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197-0915  
Phone (734) 544-6700

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Susan R. Cerniglia Public Information Officer, Washtenaw County Public Health  
Email: [ringle@ewashtenaw.org](mailto:ringle@ewashtenaw.org)  
Phone: (734) 544-6759

## FOOD SOURCE IMPLICATED IN MULTI-STATE *E.coli* O145 OUTBREAK Product Recall Underway

YPSILANTI, Mich., May 6, 2010 — The food source likely responsible for a recent multi-state outbreak of *E.coli* O145 that sickened at least ten individuals in Michigan has been identified. Working closely with local, state and federal health officials, Washtenaw County Public Health provided evidence which helped implicate shredded Romaine lettuce distributed to institutions and restaurants in at least three states. The company which processed the shredded Romaine lettuce is voluntarily recalling additional Romaine products from the same supplier. Restaurants and institutions that may have received shipments of the recalled product are being notified. While the recalled lettuce should not be consumed, health officials are not recommending that consumers avoid Romaine lettuce or any other type of lettuce at this time.

At least one local establishment in Washtenaw County received lettuce from the contaminated shipment. The specific type of lettuce was not packaged for individual, retail sale to consumers; however, some retail stores may have used the recalled products to supply their in-store salad or deli bars. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is working with the company and its suppliers to track distribution of potentially contaminated products in Michigan as well as other states.

“These types of investigations are extremely complicated,” says Richard Fleece, Health Officer for Washtenaw County, “we are fortunate that we were able to contribute to the national investigation and to positively identify the food item responsible.”

In Michigan, ten cases of *E.coli* illness were confirmed as related to the multi-state outbreak, nine of which were in Washtenaw County. An additional three remain under investigation. Over 20 individuals reported symptoms consistent with *E.coli*; however, some tested negative or could not be tested. All confirmed cases became ill between April 9<sup>th</sup> and April 16<sup>th</sup>.

Washtenaw County Public Health led the local investigation and worked closely with local partners, the regional epidemiologist and the Michigan Department of Community Health to provide

epidemiological evidence. Initial results from a Michigan case-control study found a statistically significant association between eating shredded Romaine lettuce and *E.coli* illness. Both ill and well persons who reported eating at a local establishment that received the contaminated product completed detailed questionnaires that formed the basis of the study. The Michigan case-control study and laboratory results from New York provided preliminary evidence that the shredded Romaine lettuce was likely responsible for the multi-state outbreak. The FDA is continuing to investigate the actual source of contamination; this portion of the investigation is ongoing.

Symptoms of *E.coli* include abdominal cramping and diarrhea that is often severe or bloody. Persons experiencing similar symptoms should contact their health care provider. All suspected *E.coli* illness should also be reported to the health department at 734-544-6700. Most persons recover within a week; however, *E.coli* can cause a serious complication, called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS), especially in children and older adults. HUS is the leading cause of kidney failure among children in the United States. No cases of HUS have been reported in Washtenaw County.

Proper hand washing, food handling and complete cooking can help prevent many types of foodborne illness, including *E. coli*. Washtenaw County Environmental Health's food safety page is located at: <http://foodsafety.ewashtenaw.org>.

For additional information about the recall, please see:  
<http://www.freshwayfoods.com/about/press/20100506.php>

For information from the FDA, please see:  
<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm211145.htm>

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