

## **CDC Warning: If You Have Chopped Romaine Lettuce, Toss It — Then Clean Your Fridge**

**Author :** David Gurliacci

**Categories :** [Healthy Living](#)

**Tagged as :** [CDC Food Warning 2018](#)

**Date :** April 14, 2018

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration warned consumers on Friday that chopped romaine lettuce — unless you can confirm it is NOT from around Yuma, AZ — should just be thrown out because of a *E. coli* outbreak that could make you sick.

Even if you've eaten some of it already and aren't sick.

The warning is nationwide, although the CDC has received reports from people getting sick in only 11 states — including Connecticut. Twenty-two have been hospitalized, "including three people who have developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome," the federal agency said. "No deaths have been reported."

The CDC is not issuing the warning about a particular brand and doesn't give any advice on dates — any

chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma growing region in Arizona is suspect and should not be eaten, the agency says:

- **"Consumers anywhere in the United States who have store-bought chopped romaine lettuce at home, including salads and salad mixes containing chopped romaine lettuce, should not eat it and should throw it away, even if some of it was eaten and no one has gotten sick. If you do not know if the lettuce is romaine, do not eat it and throw it away."**

If you buy it in a store, check with the store to make sure it's not from that region. If you eat lettuce in a restaurant, check with the restaurant first, the CDC says:

"Before purchasing romaine lettuce at a grocery store or eating it at a restaurant, consumers should confirm with the store or restaurant that it is not chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region," the agency says on its website. "If you cannot confirm the source of the romaine lettuce, do not buy it or eat it."

In a tweet from the CDC Twitter account, the agency says consumers who had chopped romaine lettuce — unless they know it wasn't from the Yuma, AZ growing region — should wash out their refrigerators as well as throw out the lettuce. Here's what the tweet said:

- E.coli outbreak: Check your fridge! Throw away all chopped romaine lettuce, including salad mixes containing romaine. Clean all fridge, counter, and food surfaces with warm soapy water.

The Food and Drug Administration [issued a similar warning](#), with this additional advice:

#### **What Do Consumers Need To Do?**

Consumers should ask retailers where their romaine lettuce was sourced from and not eat or buy chopped romaine lettuce from Yuma, Arizona.

If you have already bought products containing chopped romaine lettuce, such as bagged salads, salad

mixes or prepared salads, throw them away and do not eat them.

At this time, the FDA does not have information to indicate that whole-head romaine lettuce or hearts of romaine have contributed to this outbreak.

Consumers should always practice safe food handling and preparation measures. It is recommended that they wash hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after handling food.

For refrigerators and other food preparation surfaces and food cutting utensils that may have come in contact with contaminated foods, it is very important that the consumers thoroughly clean these areas and items.

Consumers should follow these simple steps:

- Wash the inside walls and shelves of the refrigerator, cutting boards and countertops; then sanitize them with a solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach to one gallon of hot water; dry with a clean cloth or paper towel that has not been previously used.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Wipe up spills in the refrigerator immediately and clean the refrigerator regularly.
- Always wash hands with hot, soapy water following the cleaning and sanitization process.
- Persons who think they might have become ill from eating potentially contaminated foods should consult their health care provider.

According to [a Washington Post article](#) published on Saturday:

“Individuals with this infection usually get better within about five to seven days; however, some illnesses can be serious or even life-threatening,” said Shereef Elnahal, commissioner of the health department in New Jersey, which first reported a high number of cases.

"Health officials said children under the age of 5, seniors older than 65 and those with weak immune systems are most vulnerable. So far, the outbreak has sickened people ages 12 to 84."

***Here's [what the CDC says on its website](#) (in two updates on Friday):***

- Information collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region could be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7 and could make people sick.

- At this time, no common grower, supplier, distributor, or brand has been identified.
- [Advice to Consumers:](#)
  - Consumers anywhere in the United States who have store-bought chopped romaine lettuce at home, including salads and salad mixes containing chopped romaine lettuce, should not eat it and should throw it away, even if some of it was eaten and no one has gotten sick. If you do not know if the lettuce is romaine, do not eat it and throw it away.
  - Before purchasing romaine lettuce at a grocery store or eating it at a restaurant, consumers should confirm with the store or restaurant that it is not chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region. If you cannot confirm the source of the romaine lettuce, do not buy it or eat it.
- [Advice to Restaurants and Retailers:](#)
  - Restaurants and retailers should not serve or sell any chopped romaine lettuce, including salads and salad mixes containing chopped romaine lettuce, from the Yuma, Arizona growing region.
  - Restaurants and retailers should ask their suppliers about the source of their chopped romaine lettuce.
- CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) are investigating a multistate outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 (*E. coli* O157:H7) infections.
- Thirty-five people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported from 11 states.
  - Twenty-two people have been hospitalized, including three people who have developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome.
  - No deaths have been reported.
- This investigation is ongoing, and CDC will provide updates when more information is available.

## Case Count Update

Since the last update on April 10, 2018, 18 more people from 9 states were added to this outbreak.

As of April 12, 2018, 35 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported from 11 states. A list of the states and the number of cases in each can be found on the [Case Count Map page](#). Illnesses started on dates ranging from [March 22, 2018 to March 31, 2018](#). Ill people range in age from 12 to 84 years, with a median age of 29. Sixty-nine percent of ill people are female. Twenty-two ill people have been hospitalized, including three people who developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a type of kidney failure. No deaths have been reported.

Illnesses that occurred after March 27, 2018, 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](#).

The current outbreak is not related to a recent multistate outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections linked to [leafy greens](#). People in the previous outbreak were infected with a different DNA fingerprint of *E. coli* O157:H7 bacteria.

### **Investigation Update**

Epidemiologic evidence collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce is the likely source of this outbreak. Twenty-six (93%) of 28 people interviewed reported consuming romaine lettuce in the week before their illness started. This percentage is significantly higher than results from a [survey\[787 KB\]](#) of healthy people in which 46% reported eating romaine lettuce in the week before they were interviewed. Most people reported eating a salad at a restaurant, and romaine lettuce was the only common ingredient identified among the salads eaten. The restaurants reported using bagged, chopped romaine lettuce to make salads. At this time, ill people are not reporting whole heads or hearts of romaine.

Traceback investigations are ongoing to determine the source of chopped romaine lettuce supplied to restaurant locations where ill people ate. At this time, no common grower, supplier, distributor, or brand has been identified. However, preliminary information indicates that the chopped romaine lettuce was from the Yuma, Arizona growing region.

Information collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region could be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7 and could make people sick. Read [CDC's advice](#) to consumers, restaurants, and retailers.

This investigation is ongoing, and CDC will provide more information as it becomes available.