



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Officials Respond to an Outbreak of E. Coli at a Correctional Facility in Nome

April 19, 2018 ANCHORAGE, AK - State officials are responding to an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis caused by Escherichia coli (E.coli) O157:H7 bacteria in the Anvil Mountain Correctional Center in Nome. Eight confirmed cases have been identified to date. The recently discovered cases appear to be connected to a nationwide E. coli outbreak affecting at least 53 persons in 16 states and linked to romaine lettuce grown in Yuma, Arizona.

The state departments of Health and Social Services, Environmental Conservation, and Corrections are working together to investigate and control the outbreak.

Symptoms of E. coli O157:H7 infection include bad stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody) and vomiting. Occasionally, more serious complications can occur, including kidney failure and death. Alaskans should talk to a health care provider if they have symptoms of E.coli infection. Cases should be reported to the Department of Health and Social Services by calling (907) 269-8000.

The investigation has confirmed that the romaine lettuce consumed by the Nome patients was grown in Yuma, Arizona. Because this outbreak involves a strain of E. coli bacteria (O157:H7) that can lead to serious illness including kidney failure, state officials are asking Alaskans to follow [CDC recommendations](#) and avoid any romaine lettuce products that could be contaminated.

Restaurants, retailers and consumers should ask suppliers about the source of their lettuce, and if it is from Yuma, Arizona, it should be thrown away and not eaten. This includes both whole head and chopped romaine lettuce.

No additional cases have been identified in Alaska outside of the Anvil Mountain Correctional Center. None of the eight patients identified in the Alaska outbreak have been hospitalized and none have died. Investigations are ongoing, and DHSS will provide updates when more information is available.

Careful hygiene is critical to prevent the spread of E. coli. E. coli can be transmitted through consumption of contaminated food or water, or through contact with infected people or animals. Areas where romaine lettuce has been stored should be washed and sanitized. To control the outbreak in Nome, Department of Corrections staff are sanitizing areas where patients live and encouraging frequent and thorough hand washing for all inmates.

For more information:

Department of Environmental Conservation – Food safety and product recall (Lorinda Lhotka, 907-451-2119 lorinda.lhotka@alaska.gov)

Department of Health and Social Services – E.coli, health concerns, and the state’s ongoing epidemiological investigation (Clinton Bennett, 907-269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov)

Department of Corrections – Anvil Mountain Corrections Center outbreak (Megan Edge, 907-269-5037, megan.edge@alaska.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention E. coli Outbreak information:
<https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/index.html>

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