

Outbreak of *E. coli* 0157:H7 among people who ate ground beef in restaurants

To: Vermont Health Care Providers, Hospitals, and Ambulatory Care Centers

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- The Vermont Department of Health has become aware of 9 confirmed and 1 suspect case of *E. coli* 0157:H7. Seven cases with pulsed field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) molecular subtyping are a match with a pattern specific to this Vermont outbreak. PFGE molecular subtyping is pending on two cases; laboratory results are pending on the suspect case. Two cases occurred in children over age 5.
- A case-control study strongly suggests that eating a specific ground beef product at a restaurant is the risk factor for illness. Restaurants where the case-patients ate have stopped serving the implicated ground beef.
- Distribution of the ground beef may have extended beyond the identified restaurants. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investigating product processing and distribution.
- Symptoms reported by these 10 patients include diarrhea (100%), abdominal cramping (90%), bloody diarrhea (80%), vomiting (40%), and fever (40%).
- We recommend that you test for *E. coli* 0157:H7 when evaluating patients with gastrointestinal illness, particularly young children who are at risk for hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS).
- The Vermont Department of Health Laboratory provides stool and confirmatory testing for *E. coli* 0157:H7 and other bacterial enteric pathogens. Molecular subtyping is performed for all isolates by PFGE.
- To report a suspect case of *E. coli* 0157:H7, contact the Infectious Disease Section at 802-863-7240 or 1-800-640-4374 [in Vermont]. An epidemiologist is available 24/7.