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NEWS RELEASE

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E. coli Illness in Georgia Linked to Multi-state Outbreak

Infections Tied to Romaine Lettuce from Arizona

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have confirmed one case of *E. coli* infection in Georgia that is linked to the multi-state outbreak of *E. coli*. The CDC has identified romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region as the likely source of the outbreak strain of *E. coli*. Eighty-four people from 19 states have been infected so far.

The Georgia case linked to the multi-state outbreak of *E. coli* is a metro Atlanta teenager and was hospitalized, but has since been released. The individual ate salad containing romaine lettuce at different restaurants in the metro area, and also ate bagged romaine purchased at a local grocery store.

Symptoms of *E. coli* infection usually develop between 2-8 days after contact with the bacteria. Most people experience diarrhea (that can be bloody), severe stomach cramps and vomiting. Some infections are very mild and people recover within a week. Other infections are severe or even life-threatening.

“This particular strain of *E. coli* has resulted in more hospitalizations than we would normally expect with this type of outbreak,” said Cherie Drenzek, DVM, state epidemiologist. “It is crucial that the public understands how serious *E. coli* infections can be, and to heed all recommended precautions about avoiding romaine lettuce for the time being.”

The CDC recommends:

- Consumers **avoid all romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region**, including whole heads and hearts of romaine, chopped romaine and salads and salad mixes containing romaine lettuce.
- Understand that product labels often do not identify growing regions; **do not eat or buy romaine lettuce if you do not know where it was grown.**
- Don't take chances - if you are not sure what romaine lettuce is or what it looks like, **do not eat it.**
- Washing lettuce will not eliminate *E. coli* – the bacteria can stick to leafy surfaces or hide in microscopic crevices.

- **Contact your healthcare provider** if you have diarrhea that lasts for more than three days or is accompanied by high fever, blood in the stool, or so much vomiting that you cannot keep liquids down and you pass very little urine.

For more information log on to <https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/signs-symptoms.html>.

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About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency in preventing disease, injury and disability; promoting health and well-being; and preparing for and responding to disasters. DPH's main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records, and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information about DPH visit www.dph.ga.gov.