

Press Release

NH Department of Health and Human Services Investigating *E. coli* Outbreak

Residents Encouraged to Cook Beef Thoroughly to Prevent Illness

Contact:

Public Information Office

(603) 271-9290

Bureau of Infectious Disease Control

Publish Date:

July 22, 2016

Concord, NH- The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) is investigating an outbreak of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 (*E. coli*) associated with ground beef. Since June, 12 people have been infected with the same strain of *E. coli* after eating ground beef. Investigations are underway to determine the source of the ground beef. The safety of ground beef in the United States is regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which is assisting DPHS with the investigation.

“The Division of Public Health Services is working with our federal partners to investigate the source of the ground beef that is causing people in New Hampshire to become ill,” said Marcella Bobinsky, Acting Director of DPHS. “Ground beef is a known source of *E. coli* and it is important for people to avoid eating under-cooked ground beef whether at home or at a restaurant. Young children and the elderly are especially vulnerable to severe illness with this infection.”

The people who became ill ate ground beef at a number of different locations. DPHS and USDA are actively working to identify the specific source of the ground beef and will provide updates as they become available. This outbreak does not present a risk to New Hampshire residents as long as they strictly follow food safety best practices. Ground beef should be cooked to a temperature of at least 160°F or 70°C. It is best to use a thermometer, since color is not a very reliable indicator of ‘doneness.’ People should also prevent cross contamination in food preparation areas by thoroughly washing hands, counters, cutting boards, and utensils after they touch raw meat.

Escherichia coli O157:H7 is bacteria that causes severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting. If there is fever, it usually is not very high. Most people get better within 5–7 days. Some infections are very mild, but others are severe or even life-threatening. Very young children and the elderly

are more likely to develop a potentially life-threatening complication known as hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). Antibiotics should not be used to treat this infection because they may increase the risk of HUS.

For further information visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/general/index.html>, or to report a suspected case contact the DPHS Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496.