

Foodborne illness outbreak info sheet #2

Update on *Cyclospora* in produce

August 6, 2013

Outbreak info: As of August 5, 2013, CDC has reported 466 cases of *Cyclospora* infections in a number of states, including 151 cases in Iowa, 85 in Nebraska, 157 in Texas, 3 in Kansas and 3 in Missouri. Some of the cases in Kansas and Missouri were likely acquired outside of that state. At least 27 people have been reported to be hospitalized in five states. Most of the illness onset dates have ranged from mid-June through early July. These numbers may continue to rise as cases are investigated. More information is available from:

www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/outbreaks/investigation-2013.html

Information on organism: *Cyclospora* is a parasite which is spread by consuming food (often produce) or water contaminated with infected feces. It usually takes 1 week from the time the contaminated food is consumed until the person becomes sick. Symptoms include persistent watery diarrhea with frequent bowel movements, which can last an average of 60 days if not treated. More information on *Cyclospora* is available in the previous info sheet on this subject (available from: <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/foodsafety/>) or from:

www.cdc.gov/parasites/cyclosporiasis/index.html

What caused outbreak: The cases in Iowa and Nebraska have been associated with eating pre-packaged food service salad mix produced by Taylor Farms of Mexico and distributed to Darden restaurants (including Olive Garden and Red Lobster). The source(s) of the cases in the other states has not yet been determined.

What to tell consumers:

- Rewashing bagged salad that is labeled as “washed” or “ready-to-eat” does NOT appear to reduce the risk of foodborne illness, but actually may increase the risk of cross-contamination in your kitchen.
 - o Any microorganisms that may remain on the leaves after the commercial washing process by the producer will be tightly attached and very difficult to remove by washing at home.
 - o If any microorganisms are dislodged from the leaves, they could easily remain in your kitchen sink and/or whatever other surfaces came into contact with the leaves.
- If you do buy pre-washed bagged salads, be sure to keep them refrigerated at 35 to 40°F, observe the “use by” dates marked on the package, and remove any damaged or spoiled leaves.
- With unpackaged lettuce and other leafy greens (or bagged salad NOT labeled as “washed”), consumers should always wash the greens before serving. More information on washing produce was available in the previous info sheet on this subject.
- Officials believe that the implicated contaminated produce is no longer on the market. Leafy greens served at restaurants have typically been more extensively handled (than leafy greens consumed at

home) and could potentially be contaminated. Consumers should decide on the level of risk they are willing to accept when consuming this product.

More information:

New Texas Illnesses Bring Cyclospora Case Count to 469: www.foodsafetynews.com/2013/08/new-texas-illnesses-bring-cyclospora-case-count-to-469/#.UgEXMW0biEs

Safe Handling of Lettuce and Leafy Green Salads:
http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/food_safety/handling/hgic3518.html

Is whole lettuce safer than pre-cut greens in a bag: <http://barfblog.com/2010/05/is-whole-lettuce-safer-than-pre-cut-greens-in-a-bag/>

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