

## **Get in the know about the romaine lettuce E.coli outbreak**

There has been quite a buzz in the news media lately about an E.coli outbreak related to romaine lettuce that is making people sick. More than half of those who've gotten sick have been hospitalized, and one person has died. You may be wondering whether it is safe to eat romaine lettuce, since it can still be found in restaurants and in stores. For more information about this outbreak and how to protect yourself, continue reading below.

**How widespread is the outbreak:** At last count, the CDC reports that 149 people nationwide have been affected by the outbreak. Two people in Illinois have been affected.

**What forms of romaine should be avoided?** The CDC recommends that you not eat any form of romaine, including “whole heads and hearts of romaine, chopped romaine, and salads and salad mixes containing romaine lettuce. If you do not know if the lettuce in a salad mix is romaine, do not eat it.” Read the labels on bagged salad mix, since it is not always obvious if it contains romaine.

**Does it matter where the romaine came from?** According to the CDC, the infected romaine has come from the Yuma growing region of Arizona. Product labels often do not identify growing regions however. Do not eat or buy romaine if you are uncertain about where it was grown.

**This ban has been on for weeks. Isn't the romaine lettuce in the stores safe now?** Not necessarily. Romaine lettuce has a long shelf life – up to four weeks. Production of romaine only recently shifted away from the affected Yuma area.

**What about romaine that I already have in my refrigerator.** You should discard this.

**Will rinsing the lettuce remove the E.coli?** No. According to Consumer Reports, washing has proven to be ineffective in removing E. coli from leafy greens.

**For more information:** Here are some reliable sources for information about this outbreak:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/map.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/advice-consumers.html>

<https://www.consumerreports.org/e-coli/romaine-lettuce-e-coli-cases-climb-what-you-need-to-know/>