News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Friday, September 15, 2006

Wyoming Case Linked to Current National E. Coli Outbreak

Officials from the Wyoming Department of Health announced today that at least one Wyoming resident has joined the ranks of those affected across the country by the current E. coli outbreak that has been possibly linked to bagged fresh spinach.

The older man is from Fremont County. He was treated at an emergency room in Riverton last week, and the case was reported today to the Wyoming Department of Health. It is not yet known whether the man consumed bagged spinach recently, but lab tests link his case to the current national outbreak.

E.coli infection typically causes severe bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps. ñPeople with prolonged, unexplained, and/or bloody diarrhea should contact their health care provider,ò said Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health.

ñAt the Department of Health weôre also encouraging health care providers to be aware of this current outbreak so they may recommend testing for their patients as appropriate,ò Murphy said.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an initial alert Thursday (9/14/06) about the current outbreak and recommended that people not eat bagged fresh spinach. Dozens of people in several states have fallen ill and one has died.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates there are about 73,000 cases of E. coli infection in the United States each year. According to CDC, infection can also cause a complication in 2 to 7 percent of cases in which the red blood cells are destroyed and the kidneys fail. Young children and the elderly are particularly at risk for this complication.

Most cases are associated with eating undercooked, contaminated ground beef. Other sources can include swimming in or drinking sewage-contaminated water, or consuming salami, unpasteurized milk and juice, and sprouts or leafy vegetables.

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