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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
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***E. coli* O157 Illnesses in Michigan Likely Related to Ground Beef**

LANSING, Mich. - The Michigan Departments of Community Health (MDCH) and Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) along with local health departments in Kent, Livingston, Oakland, Ottawa, and Washtenaw counties are investigating a cluster of recent illnesses due to the bacteria *E. coli* O157.

Five confirmed Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* O157 illnesses have been reported in adults between 20-41 years of age with symptom onset dates from April 22 - May 1. Three individuals have been hospitalized. None of the ill individuals have developed hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a severe complication of *E. coli* O157 infection, and no deaths have been reported.

Laboratory results suggest these illnesses are linked to a common source. The investigation is ongoing, and preliminary information collected from ill persons indicates that ground beef is most likely the source. Ill individuals ate undercooked ground beef at several different restaurants in multiple locations. MDARD is working with local health departments and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to determine the source of the ground beef and how widely it was distributed.

"*E. coli* O157 illnesses can be very serious or life-threatening, especially for young children, older adults, and people who are immunocompromised," said Dr. Matthew Davis, Chief Medical Executive at the MDCH. "Whether you cook at home or order in a restaurant, ground meats, including ground beef, should always be cooked thoroughly to the proper temperature."

MDARD advises all consumers to safely prepare their raw meat products, including fresh and frozen, and only consume ground beef that has been cooked to an internal temperature of 160° F. The only way to confirm ground beef is cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful bacteria is to use a food thermometer that measures internal temperature.

Some kinds of *E. coli* cause disease by making a toxin called Shiga toxin. A gastrointestinal infection caused by Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* O157 can cause diarrhea (often bloody) and abdominal cramps three to four days after exposure (incubation range 2-10 days). Most people get better within five to seven days, but the elderly, infants, and those with weak immune systems are more likely to develop severe or even life-threatening illness, such as hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). Persons who are ill with these symptoms and have consumed ground beef recently should consult with their medical provider and ask about being tested for an *E. coli* infection.

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