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Stores Throw Out Bagged Spinach After Federal Warning

By [MARIA NEWMAN](#)

Grocery stores all over the United States threw out bags of fresh spinach today as officials continued to investigate a nationwide outbreak of E. coli infections that has so far claimed one life and sickened more than 90 people in 20 states, including New York and Connecticut.

"If you have bought pre-packaged fresh spinach, don't eat it," said Dr. Antonia C. Novello, New York's state health commissioner, in a press release. "If it is in your refrigerator throw it out. Rinsing the spinach will not make it safe to eat."

The outbreak involves a virulent strain of E. coli, which produces a toxin that can lead to bloody diarrhea, kidney failure and, in rare cases, death.

But while federal officials said the bacteria most likely came from bagged spinach, they were not offering any details today on where they believe the outbreak had originated, or whether one producer or distributor was involved.

"It is too early to say where the spinach has come from," said Laura Alvey, a spokeswoman for the [Food and Drug Administration](#). "This is an active investigation, and we will provide more information as it becomes available. We have no evidence that this was deliberate."

E. coli cases were confirmed in nine states on Thursday, including Wisconsin, where the one death occurred. Officials in 11 more states confirmed cases today, the the F.D.A. said, with officials in Albany reporting seven cases in the western and central parts of New York State.

"It's probably too early to try to guess how many people might be affected by this," Gwenda Bond, a spokeswoman for the Kentucky health department, told The Associated Press. "Clearly, E. coli can be serious, especially the kind we're seeing right now."

The [Centers for Disease Control](#) in Atlanta said that an estimated 73,000 cases of E. coli infection and 61 deaths occur in the United States each year. Infection often leads to bloody diarrhea, and occasionally to kidney failure.

State and federal health officials have used genetic screening tools to confirm that the first 50 people sickened by the disease suffered from the same bacteria, Dr. David Acheson of the F.D.A. said on Thursday.

The first case reported to federal officials was on Aug. 23.

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