

AT LEAST 30 DEATHS LINKED TO RARE E. COLI STRAIN, O104:H4

Over 2400 illnesses including 720 cases of kidney failure in one of largest outbreaks in history



The cause of this outbreak remains unknown, but the majority of those sickened ate fresh raw sprouts, lettuce, tomatoes, and/or cucumbers

Authorities in Germany recommend to avoid eating sprouts, raw lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers in that country.

However, the specific contaminated item remains unknown- the above foods are often eaten together, making the investigation difficult.

As fresh produce is not usually cooked, contamination may have occurred at the farm, at the restaurant or anywhere in between.

Raw produce has been linked to over 400 outbreaks of foodborne illness since 1990.

The largest foodborne illness outbreak Germany has ever experienced began in early May, and sick people particularly those suffering from hemolytic uremic syndrome (which leads to kidney failure) are still being reported. *E. coli* O104:H4, causes disease similar to the more common O157:H7 serotype. This strain appears to be especially dangerous and has led to more deaths and hospitalizations than usually seen with a pathogenic *E. coli* outbreak.

The majority of cases are reported in Northern Germany, but there have been illnesses reported in the U.S., Canada, Austria, Denmark, Norway,

Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, France, and the Netherlands. With the exception of only 2 cases, all those affected had recently visited Germany.

The source of the outbreak has been difficult to determine as indicators and pathogens have been found on many of the foods that have been investigated, but the outbreak strain has not been found.

