



# Minnesota Department of Health

## News Release

March 4, 2011

### **Contact information**

## Multi-state investigation links *E. coli* O157:H7 cases to eating in-shell hazelnuts

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) are working with counterparts in Wisconsin, Michigan, and federal agencies to investigate cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 infection associated with eating in-shell hazelnuts (also known as filberts) purchased from bulk bins at retail food stores. Three cases have been identified in Minnesota, three in Wisconsin, and one in Michigan.

In Minnesota, all three cases were male and over 50 years of age. Cases were residents of Hennepin, Redwood, and Stearns counties. Two were hospitalized. All have recovered.

Routine monitoring by the health departments in the respective states identified *E. coli* O157:H7 cases with the same DNA fingerprint. The individuals became ill between December 20, 2010, and January 28, 2011. All of the cases have reported eating in-shell hazelnuts from grocery stores. Of these, six purchased them from bulk bins at these stores and the other case reported purchasing similar product in a repacked form. Four of the cases reported purchasing the hazelnuts as part of mixed nuts.

Agriculture agencies in the three states and the California Department of Public Health traced hazelnuts consumed by cases to a common distributor in California, DeFranco and Sons. This firm has recalled all hazelnut and mixed nut products distributed from November 2, 2010, to December 22, 2010. Recalled product was shipped to stores in Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

State and federal officials urge consumers not to eat any in-shell hazelnuts included in this recall. To identify whether hazelnuts that have been purchased are part of the recall, consumers in the states listed above are advised to go to the MDA website at [www.mda.state.mn.us](http://www.mda.state.mn.us) to access a list of stores that sold bulk affected in-shell hazelnuts, either alone or as part of a mixed nut product. Also included in the recall are Sunripe Hazelnuts, Sunripe Large Hazelnuts in 1-pound packages, and Sunripe Mixed Nuts in 2-pound and 4-pound packages, all with a "Sell-By" date of 6/30/2011. Recalled products would have been purchased after November 2, 2010. Consumers with recalled hazelnuts still in their possession should discard them or return them to the store from which they were purchased. Out-of-shell hazelnuts and products containing hazelnuts as an ingredient have not been linked to any illnesses and are not affected by the recall.

Symptoms of *E. coli* O157:H7 illness typically include severe stomach cramps and diarrhea, often with bloody stools, but little or no fever. People typically become ill two to five days after eating contaminated food. Most people recover in five to 10 days. However, *E. coli* O157:H7 infections sometimes lead to a serious complication called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), characterized by kidney failure.

Those who develop such symptoms after consuming this product should contact their health care provider immediately. *E. coli* O157:H7 infections should not be treated with antibiotics, which might promote the development of HUS. More information on *E. coli* O157:H7 can be found at [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us).

**-MDH-**

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