

Health Advisory

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The Clark County Health District advises consumers of risks associated with eating raw and lightly cooked sprouts

Based on an updated Food and Drug Administration (FDA) health advisory, the Clark County Health District is advising the public to avoid eating all raw and lightly cooked sprouts. Alfalfa sprouts and lightly cooked mung bean sprouts have recently been associated with an outbreak of *e. coli* O157:H7.

While no outbreaks attributed to sprouts have been identified in Clark County, consumers are advised not to eat them because of the known risks. Persons in high-risk categories (children, the elderly and the immunocompromised) are more at risk for developing a foodborne illness.

Outbreaks of foodborne illness from all implicated raw sprouts have involved the pathogenic bacteria salmonella or *e. coli* O157:H7. For people in high risk categories an *e. coli* infection could lead to serious complications, including hemolytic uremic syndrome, which can result in kidney failure or death. Salmonella infection can also lead to serious illness for someone in a high-risk category.

The FDA offers the following advice to all consumers regarding sprouts:

- Cook all sprouts thoroughly before eating to significantly reduce the risk of illness.
- Sandwiches and salads purchased at restaurants and delicatessens often contain raw sprouts. Consumers who wish to reduce their risk of foodborne illness should specifically request that raw sprouts not be added to their food.
- Homegrown sprouts also present a health risk if eaten raw or lightly cooked. Many outbreaks have been attributed to contaminated seed. If pathogenic bacteria are present in or on seed, they can grow to high levels during sprouting, even under clean conditions.

Consumers who have eaten raw or lightly cooked sprouts and are experiencing diarrhea or other symptoms of foodborne infections are advised to consult their health care providers.

Additional information is available at www.fda.cfsan.gov.

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