

## France investigates 2 new suspected E. coli cases

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People walk into a Lidl supermarket in Chambourcy, 30 kms (29 mls) west of Paris, Thursday, June 16, 2011. French health authorities have ordered a recall of hamburger patties sold by a German supermarket chain after five children were infected by the E. coli bacteria. The regional health agency said there was no immediate sign of a link with the deadly E. coli outbreak in Germany in recent weeks. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

(AP) -- French authorities are investigating two new suspected cases of E. coli linked to hamburger patties that have already sickened seven children, the health minister said Friday.

Health authorities have ordered a recall of 10 tons of the frozen beef patties produced in France and sold by the German supermarket chain Lidl, but say there is no link to a [deadly outbreak](#) of the virus in neighboring Germany.

Seven children, between 18 months and 8 years old, have been hospitalized with E. coli linked to the patties in northern France.

[Health Minister](#) Xavier Bertrand said two new patients were being examined for signs of E. coli and the results should be available Saturday. The regional health chief, Daniel Lenoir, said the two ate the same beef patties and later suffered severe diarrhea.

Doctors at the Lille University Hospital in northern France told a news conference Friday that one of the hospitalized children, a 2-year-old, needs breathing assistance and is being held in an artificial coma.

The child ate one of the beef patties, which had been only slightly browned, Health Minister Xavier Bertrand said, urging parents to cook their meat thoroughly.

Beef and beef patties are often eaten less well-done in France than in the United States or some other countries. The French sometimes savor steak tartare, a dish based on uncooked [ground beef](#).

Two of the hospitalized children should be able to go home early next week, said their doctor, Michel Foulard. "The [children](#) are starting to recover."

The manufacturer, French company SEB, said the beef for the patties came from farms in France, Germany and the Netherlands and said the patties were analyzed before being delivered to supermarket distributors. Lidl said it has removed all the patties from its shelves.

French health officials said Friday the strain of E. coli found in France is discovered fairly regularly. European Union spokesman Frederic Vincent said there were 3,500 cases of E. coli in the EU last year, 93 of them in France.

The deadly German outbreak, which has killed 39 people and infected over 3,500, was eventually traced last week to sprouts from a farm in northern Germany. German [health officials](#) say the number of new infections from that outbreak is tailing off but they have still not determined how the sprouts were contaminated.

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