

# Organic walnuts tied to serious E. coli illnesses

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Organic walnuts from a California grower that were distributed to health food and co-op stores in 19 states have been linked to serious cases of E. coli illness, federal officials reported Tuesday.

So far, 12 people have been sickened; seven were so ill they required hospitalization, according to the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#). Six cases each have been identified in California and Washington state. There have been no deaths reported.

The [walnuts](#) were produced and distributed by Gibson Farms of Hollister, Calif., and were typically sold in bulk bins in stores, although some may have repackaged the shelled walnut halves and pieces into plastic clamshell packaging or bags, the FDA said.

The walnuts were sold in 19 states: Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

"State and local public health officials have interviewed people about the foods they ate in the week before they became ill," the FDA noted. "Of the 10 people interviewed, all 10 [100%] reported eating walnuts, and almost all reported buying organic walnuts from bulk bins in food co-ops or natural food stores."

FDA investigators traced the outbreak back to Gibson Farms, which issued a company [recall](#) on April 27.

"Retailers and distributors that purchased recalled boxes of Gibson Farms, Inc. organic walnuts halves and pieces with lot codes 3325-043 and 3341-501 should not sell this product and should notify their customers of the recall," the FDA said. Stores should reach out to their suppliers if they're uncertain as to whether they received the tainted walnuts.

Stores that know they sold the products between October and late April should also alert customers, the FDA said.

"Consumers who purchased organic walnut halves and pieces from bulk bins at stores listed below should check their pantries, refrigerators and freezers and should not eat the organic walnuts halves and pieces," the FDA said. "If you have these products in your home, do not eat or use them, throw them away and clean and sanitize surfaces they touched."

E. coli is a serious gastrointestinal bacterial infection that can trigger severe stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever, nausea, and/or vomiting. Symptoms typically begin within a few days of consuming tainted food.

In some cases, E. coli can lead to bloody stools and "a type of kidney failure called [hemolytic uremic syndrome](#) (HUS), or the development of high blood pressure, [chronic kidney disease](#) and neurologic problems," the FDA warned.

**More information:** Find out more about E. coli at the [Mayo Clinic](#).

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