

Donairs linked to illnesses

Recent report of outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 traced to improperly cooked donairs in Alberta, Canada

from: Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Sun, Calgary Sun, Health Canada, wikipedia



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There have been at least **3** *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks associated with eating donairs in Alberta since 2004

Donairs are problematic for foodborne illness because of the cone-shaped cooking style. A cone of beef (sometimes ground / pressed beef is used) is rotated around a heat source so the outside of the cone cooks inwards.

Problems occur when the inside of the cone does not reach high enough temperatures to kill all dangerous bacteria which may be present, and meat from below the cooked surface is served.

The Calgary Health Region announced in 2005 that donair meat must be grilled after it has been sliced off the rotating cone. The extra step before the meat is wrapped in a pita is intended to ensure the meat is fully cooked, which will prevent the spread of harmful *E. coli*.

Two Calgary, Alberta, children infected with *E. coli* O157:H7 after eating donairs in September 2004 are seeking \$600,000 for the injuries they suffered.



"It's the same mechanism as with hamburger," he said. "When you grind meat you can actually mix E. coli contamination from the surface of the meat, which happens during the slaughtering process, into the middle of the meat." -- Dr. Gerry Predy, the region's medical officer of health.

Alberta *E. coli* O157:H7 donair outbreaks timeline:

- 62 ill and 6 hospitalizations in 2004
- Calgary health region changes rules on donair preparation in 2005
- Lawsuit stemming from 2004 outbreak reported in March 2006
- 12 more cases in May 2006
- 8 cases potentially linked to donairs in November 2006
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency recalls donair cones because of contamination with *E. coli* O157:H7 in November 2006

Cooking to a safe temperature is important for all foods

- Cooking food from frozen can lead to problems in many foods, not just donairs
- Use a thermometer to make sure the food is cooked to a safe temperature
- Poultry should be cooked to 165°F, ground beef products to 160°F

