

Popular Fast Food Chain 'Taco Bell' Is Under Federal Investigation

When you're in the mood for a Supreme Chalupa and an ice-cold Mountain Dew Baja Blast, there's really nowhere to go other than Taco Bell.

Much to the chagrin of fans of the popular fast food chain, turns out that if you're in the mood for a federal investigation into a rather unpleasant illness being spread, Taco Bell can help serve you there, too.

According to multiple reports, Taco Bell is currently being probed by both state and federal investigators concerned about a potential connection between the faux Mexican food and a potential cyclosporiasis outbreak.

Fox Business reported that cyclosporiasis cases are on the rise in America, particularly in Michigan, where a Detroit-based Taco Bell seems to be under particular scrutiny.

Taco Bell told Fox Business via statement: "The health and safety of our guests is our top priority. Public health officials have not confirmed a link to Taco Bell or any specific ingredient, supplier, restaurant or retailer. While authorities continue their broader review, Taco Bell has voluntarily and temporarily removed limited ingredients at select restaurants as a precautionary measure. We will continue to closely monitor the situation and follow the guidance of public health authorities."

The issue has been rampant enough that the Michigan Department of Health put out a message on Monday addressing the concern.

And the produce that's being linked to this illness? "Lettuce

or salad greens” – which are obviously present in many of Taco Bell’s offerings.

“While the investigation is ongoing, current results point to lettuce or salad greens as a potential source for this outbreak, although other food items cannot be completely ruled out,” the department statement read. “No specific type of produce, grower or supplier has been identified as the source.”

“Although we do not have a definite product identified as the source of the outbreak, we want to let Michiganders know what we have learned so far so they can take steps to protect their families,” Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive, said in a statement.



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She added, “Early information has shown lettuce as a common product that regularly comes up during the investigation. We will continue to provide updates as we learn more.”

While the agency didn’t specifically name Taco Bell in its Monday message, the New York Post reported that Michigan is being treated as the “center of the outbreak.”

Many Taco Bell customers in the area were taken off guard when the restaurant suddenly announced that it would be removing certain items – like lettuce – from its offerings.

And now, that reason appears to be because of this cyclosporiasis outbreak.

The Michigan Health Department explains what this parasite involves: “Cyclospora is a parasite that infects the intestines and causes watery diarrhea, nausea, and stomach cramps. It is often contracted by eating or drinking something contaminated with the parasite.”

Alas, due to the parasite's incubation period of two weeks, Michigan expects that this investigation is far from being finished.

Interestingly, Michigan did note that water is not a normal way for this parasite to travel. While the agency warns against consuming recreational water found in places like lakes, just as a general practice, cyclosporiasis is primarily a foodborne illness.

The Michigan Health Department also offered a number of best practices while they try to better get a grasp of this rapidly spreading illness.

The agency recommends purchasing whole heads of lettuce rather than pre-washed, bagged lettuce. It's also recommended to throw away the two or three outer layers of that head. From there, one should thoroughly wash the inner leaves under clean, running water. And lastly, if possible, cooking greens to a temperature of 158 degrees Fahrenheit "is the safest option."

Of particular concern, the cooking tip also includes a somewhat ominous factoid: "The parasite is resistant to routine chemical disinfection and washing alone cannot guarantee its removal."

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