

## **EHEC: Consumers to continue to refrain from eating tomatoes, cucumbers and green salads raw**

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BfR recommends that for the time being consumers should, by way of precaution, continue to refrain from eating tomatoes, cucumbers and green salads raw. This advice, which concerns in particular goods available in Northern Germany, continues to apply as long as the investigations about the outbreak event last.

According to information provided by the Robert Koch Institute, the number of new cases of disease continues to rise, above all in Northern Germany. It has, therefore, to be assumed that the source of infection is still active. The detection of EHEC in cucumbers in Hamburg, which were, amongst others, imported from Spain, resulted in several warnings through the European Rapid Alert System. It has not yet been proven that the EHEC subtype on the analysed cucumbers is the same as in the stool specimen of the patients.

The food monitoring authorities of the federal states currently investigate the distribution routes of the contaminated cucumbers from the place of sale to the place of origin. The investigations along the food chain are not only to protect consumers from new infections but are also to clarify why so far no or only isolated cases occurred in other regions in Germany and Europe.

BfR will adjust its recommendations on consumption as soon as the findings of food tracking and tracing allow a narrowing down of the infection sources or a significant decline in new cases permits the conclusion that the infection source no longer exists.

BfR is of the opinion that the usual hygiene measures, such as washing and peeling, are currently not sufficient for the three suspected vegetables, since already small amounts of germs can trigger an EHEC infection. Although the washing of vegetables reduces the germ count, it does not eliminate the pathogen in a safe manner. Through hand contact during peeling there is a risk of spreading the germ in the kitchen. EHEC is only safely killed if vegetables are heated.

The consumption of one or more of the above-mentioned foods would explain, in the event of a contamination with the EHEC pathogen, a large number of the HUS cases, but it cannot be excluded that other foods, too, are possible infection sources.