

# Cockroaches, previous violations at kitchen used by Calgary daycares as E. coli outbreak toll climbs to 264 <sup>[1]</sup>

22 patients have developed a disease that affects the kidneys after E. coli infection  
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Excerpts

Alberta health inspectors have disclosed they found major health issues, including cockroach infestations and unsafe food handling, at a shared kitchen used by several daycares hit by an E. coli outbreak.

This comes after an outbreak of the shiga toxin-producing E. coli, which can cause serious issues. The outbreak has sent children to hospital and some are on dialysis after developing hemolytic uremic syndrome, a disease which affects the kidneys.

At a press conference Tuesday, Dr. Mark Joffe, the province's chief medical officer of health, said the kitchen inspection came after a noticeable increase in young children coming to emergency departments over the September long weekend.

"The emergency department physicians were very astute and quickly recognized that something unusual was happening and they reached out to the medical officer of health on call and to the team," Joffe said.

"From there it was quickly determined that the cases that they were seeing were linked to daycare centres and, in turn, those daycare centres were linked to one centralized kitchen."

Since then, there have been 264 lab-confirmed cases of E. coli connected to the outbreak. The cause of the outbreak has not yet been determined and remains under investigation.

In an environmental inspection report of the kitchen at KidsU Centennial - Fueling Minds Inc., AHS detailed "significant evidence of a pest infestation" at the food establishment on Sept. 5, the date of the inspection, which happened the day after the outbreak was declared.

"Two live adult cockroaches were observed on the sides of stainless steel equipment around the dishwashing area. The tin cat traps by the two separate two-compartment sinks had at least 20 cockroaches on the sticky pads each," the report read.

AHS said the inspection also found instances of food not being handled in a manner that makes it safe to eat, and a lack of appropriate equipment for keeping food cold during transportation.

In total, inspectors found three critical violations and two non-critical violations related to an odour and utensil storage.

The report shows other violations cited on a number of dates ahead of the September inspection, including repeat violations regarding the kitchen's dishwasher.

Joffe said the kitchen is closed and will only reopen once AHS has determined that it is safe.

He added that Alberta Health Services conducts more than 40,000 inspections a year — and it is unusual to have a completely clean inspection.

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There are currently 25 patients receiving care in hospital, the province said in an emailed media release — 22 of whom are confirmed as having hemolytic uremic syndrome, which is a severe illness caused by E. coli infection.

Patients receiving dialysis

Six patients are receiving peritoneal dialysis at Alberta Children's Hospital. The children with severe illness are all in stable condition and are receiving the care they need in hospital. Other children and families are receiving care and support at three outpatient clinics set up in Calgary hospitals.

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Katie McLean's daughter, who is nearly two years old, attended Fueling Brains McKnight, one of the affected locations, and was recently

released from Alberta Children's Hospital after being sick with E. coli. McLean said the report released by AHS was "disgusting" and "hard to imagine."

She said she understands that inspections happen and violations are corrected, but said the lack of appropriate equipment for keeping food cold during transportation was the most egregious part.

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Eleven child-care facilities were closed as part of the outbreak investigation.

AHS has since rescinded the closure orders for four facilities — Little Oak Early Education, Almond Branch, Braineer Academy and Fueling Brains Bridgeland — as no one from those sites has tested positive, and public health inspectors have ensured that the sites have taken appropriate measures such as cleaning and disinfection.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency said it is providing support as the source is investigated.

On Tuesday, the Alberta NDP called for a full inquiry into the outbreak.

"When we do discover the source of that outbreak, we need to move immediately to a full and public inquiry into how this food handling site was left uninspected for months," Alberta NDP Leader Rachel Notley said in a statement.

**Related link:** Some patients on dialysis from E. coli outbreak as families launch class-action suit against daycare operators [3]

Alberta premier asks ministers for 'full assessment' of E. coli outbreak in Calgary [4]

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