

The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah courts: Woman settles E. coli lawsuit

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Published: January 18, 2011 03:27PM

Updated: January 18, 2011 03:51PM

An Orem woman who contracted a debilitating condition after eating a bag of spinach contaminated with E. coli has settled a lawsuit with the companies she claims are responsible for her illness.

Attorneys for Chelsey Macey, 26, announced the confidential settlement Tuesday as a federal court jury was deliberating how much money to award her.

Macey filed her lawsuit against Dole Food Co., Natural Selection Foods Manufacturing and Mission Organics in 2008, claiming the companies are liable for putting defective food on grocery store shelves. In the lawsuit, Macey had sought \$10 million for medical expenses, future lost earnings and suffering, said her attorney, Richard Burbidge.

"I think everybody is satisfied with the resolution," said Burbidge, an attorney with Salt Lake City-based Burbidge, Mitchell and Gross, who served as lead counsel in the case.

"She's got a big burden to shoulder, and she's ready to do that. This will help her meet her medical needs and deal with the problems she's got coming at her in the future."

Macey developed post-infectious irritable bowel disease after eating spinach tainted with E. coli in 2006, according to court documents. The condition causes her abdominal pain, cramping and discomfort with eating, the documents state.

Attorneys for the companies argued there wasn't enough evidence to support Macey's claims that the E. coli resulted in her irritable bowl syndrome. But the companies later admitted the spinach resulted in her E. coli bout and subsequent injuries following evidence presented at trial, Burbidge said.

Once a Salt Lake Community College student enrolled in a pre-pharmacy program, Macey isn't expected to be able to work in the future because of her medical conditions, according to court documents. She relies on her husband and extended family to care for her and to help care for her two young children, court documents state.

Macey didn't attend Tuesday's court hearing but is pleased with the outcome of the case, Burbidge said.

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