

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Packaged Salads Produced by Fresh Express



Food Safety Alert

Posted March 8, 2022

This outbreak is over. Stay up to date on food [recalls](#) and [outbreaks](#) to avoid getting sick from eating contaminated food.

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 10
- Hospitalizations: 10
- Deaths: 1
- [States](#): 8
- Recall: Yes
- Investigation status: Closed



What You Should Do

Prevent *Listeria*

- Find out if you are at [higher risk](#) for getting sick with *Listeria*

- Learn which foods are more likely to contain *Listeria*, and take steps to [prevent getting sick](#)
- Stay up to date on food [recalls](#) and [outbreaks](#) to avoid getting sick from eating contaminated food

Prepare Leafy Greens Safely

Vegetables, including leafy greens, are an important part of a healthy and balanced diet. However, they can sometimes be contaminated with harmful germs.

The safest produce is cooked; the next safest is washed. However, no washing method can remove all germs.

When eating raw leafy greens:

- **Wash** your hands, utensils, and surfaces before and after preparing leafy greens.
- **Clean** leafy greens before eating or cutting them.
 - Discard outer leaves on whole heads of lettuce and any torn or bruised leaves.
 - Rinse under running water and use your hands to gently rub the surface of the leaves.
 - Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel.
 - If the label on a leafy greens package says “ready to eat,” “triple washed,” or “no washing necessary,” you don’t need to wash the greens.
- **Separate** leafy greens from raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- **Refrigerate** leafy greens within 2 hours. Refrigerate within 1 hour if they have been exposed to temperatures above 90°F (such as a hot car or picnic).

Investigation Details

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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) investigated a multistate outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* infections.

Epidemiologic and laboratory data showed that packaged salads produced by Fresh Express were contaminated with *Listeria* and made people sick.

As of March 8, 2022, this outbreak is over.

Epidemiologic Data

A total of 10 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* were reported from eight states. The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely higher than the number reported, and the outbreak may not have been limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because some people recover without medical care and are not tested for *Listeria*.

Illnesses started on dates ranging from July 26, 2016, to October 19, 2021. Sick people ranged in age from 44 to 95 years, with a median age of 80, and 60% were female. All 10 people were hospitalized. One death was reported from Pennsylvania.

State and local public health officials interviewed people (or their family) about the foods they ate in the month before they got sick. Of the five people interviewed, four (80%) reported eating packaged salads of various types and two specifically reported eating Fresh Express brand salads.

Laboratory Data

Public health investigators used the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that were part of this outbreak. CDC PulseNet manages a national database of DNA fingerprints of bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses. DNA fingerprinting is performed on bacteria using a method called [whole genome sequencing \(WGS\)](#).

WGS showed that bacteria from sick people's samples were closely related genetically. This suggests that people in this outbreak got sick from the same food.

On December 16, 2021, the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development identified the outbreak strain of *Listeria* in a bag of Fresh Express Sweet Hearts packaged salad collected from a grocery store during routine

sampling. The packaged salad was produced at the Fresh Express facility in Streamwood, Illinois.

Public Health Actions

On December 20, 2021, Fresh Express recalled packaged salads produced at its facility in Streamwood, Illinois.