

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Packaged Salads Produced by Fresh Express



Food Safety Alert

Posted December 22, 2021

CDC is currently investigating two separate *Listeria* outbreaks linked to packaged salads. This outbreak is linked to packaged salads produced by Fresh Express. The other outbreak is linked to packaged salads produced by Dole.

Fast Facts

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



Recalled Food

On December 20, 2021, Fresh Express recalled several brands of packaged salad products. The recall includes all Use-By Dates with product codes Z324 through Z350.

- Brands include Fresh Express, Bowl & Basket, Giant Eagle, Little Salad Bar, Marketside, O Organics, Signature Farms, Simply Nature, Weis Fresh from the Field, and Wellsley Farms Organic.

On December 16, 2021, the Michigan Department of Agriculture identified the outbreak strain of *Listeria* in a bag of Fresh Express Sweet Hearts packaged salad.

CDC is also investigating another *Listeria* outbreak linked to packaged salads produced by Dole.

What You Should Do

- **Do not eat any recalled packaged salads.** Throw them away or return them to where you bought them.
- **Follow these five steps to clean** your refrigerator, containers, and surfaces that may have touched the recalled packaged salads. *Listeria* can survive in the refrigerator and can easily spread to other foods and surfaces.

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have these symptoms of *Listeria* infection after eating packaged salads.

- **Pregnant people** usually experience only fever, fatigue, and muscle aches. However, *Listeria* can cause pregnancy loss or premature birth. It can also cause serious illness or death in newborns.
- **People who are not pregnant** may experience headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, and convulsions, in addition to fever and muscle aches.

What Businesses Should Do

- **Do not sell or serve recalled packaged salads.**
- Follow FDA's safe handling and cleaning advice if you sold or served recalled packaged salads.

Symptoms of *Listeria*

- *Listeria* can cause severe illness (known as invasive listeriosis) when the bacteria spread beyond the gut to other parts of the body.

- Pregnant people, adults 65 years or older, and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe illness.
- **Pregnant people** typically experience only fever, fatigue, and muscle aches. However, *Listeria* infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or life-threatening infection of the newborn.
- **People who are not pregnant** may experience headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, and convulsions, in addition to fever and muscle aches.
- Symptoms of severe illness usually start 1 to 4 weeks after eating food contaminated with *Listeria* but may start as early as the same day or as late as 70 days after.
- *Listeria* can also cause common food poisoning symptoms, like diarrhea and fever. People who experience these symptoms usually recover without treatment.

Investigation Details

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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are collecting different types of data to investigate a multistate outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* infections.

Epidemiologic and laboratory data show that Fresh Express packaged salads may be contaminated with *Listeria* and may be making people sick.

Epidemiologic Data

As of December 21, 10 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* have been reported from eight states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from July 26, 2016 through October 19, 2021.

Sick people range in age from 44 to 95 years, with a median age of 80, and 60% are female. All 10 people have been hospitalized. One death has been reported from Pennsylvania.

The true number of sick people in an outbreak is likely higher than the number reported, and the outbreak may not be limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because many people recover without medical care and are not tested for *Listeria*.

State and local public health officials are interviewing people 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. Two ill people specifically reported eating Fresh Express brand salads. Investigators are working to get more information about the brands and types of packaged salads eaten by sick people.

Laboratory Data

Public health investigators are using the PulseNet system to identify illnesses that may be 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 are closely related genetically. This means that people in this outbreak likely got sick from the same food.

On December 16, 2021, the Michigan Department of Agriculture identified the outbreak strain of *Listeria* in a bag of Fresh Express Sweet Hearts Romaine Lettuce Sweet Butter Lettuce packaged salad collected from a grocery store during routine sampling.

Public Health Actions

On December 20, 2021, Fresh Express recalled packaged salads produced at its facility in Streamwood, Illinois, since November 20, 2021. Do not eat, sell, or serve recalled salads. CDC and FDA are working to determine if additional products are contaminated.