

Outbreak of *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Pet Hedgehogs

Final Update

Posted October 2, 2019 at 3:00 PM ET

This outbreak investigation is over. CDC and public health officials in several states investigated a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to contact with pet hedgehogs. Hedgehogs can carry *Salmonella* even when they look healthy and clean. Pet hedgehog owners can take steps to reduce the chance that they or their children get an infection.

Final Outbreak Information

At A Glance

- [Reported Cases](#): 54
- [States](#): 23
- Hospitalizations: 8
- Deaths: 0



- As of October 2, 2019, this investigation is over. Available information indicates the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium is present in hedgehogs. The number of reported new illnesses has decreased, but people could continue to get sick because hedgehogs can carry *Salmonella* bacteria even when they look healthy and clean.
- Since the last update on August 1, 2019, an additional 7 ill people were reported in this outbreak.
- A total of 54 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium were reported from 23 states.

- 8 people were hospitalized. No deaths were reported.
- [Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence](#) indicated that contact with pet hedgehogs was the likely source of this outbreak.
 - In interviews, 31 (84%) of 37 ill people reported contact with a hedgehog.
 - A single, common supplier of hedgehogs was not identified.

Advice to Pet Owners and Pet Retailers

Hedgehogs can carry *Salmonella* germs in their droppings while appearing healthy and clean. These germs can easily spread to their bodies, habitats, toys, bedding, and anything in the area where they live. People can get sick after they touch hedgehogs or anything in their habitats.

People who own or come in contact with hedgehogs can take [steps to stay healthy around their pet](#):

- **Wash your hands.**
 - Always [wash hands](#) thoroughly with soap and water right after touching, feeding, or caring for a hedgehog or cleaning its habitat. Adults should supervise handwashing for young children.
- **Play safely.**
 - Don't kiss or snuggle hedgehogs, because this can spread *Salmonella* germs to your face and mouth and make you sick.
 - Don't let hedgehogs roam freely in areas where food is prepared or stored, such as kitchens.
- **Clean habitats, toys, and supplies outside the house when possible.**
 - Avoid cleaning these items in the kitchen or any other location where food is prepared, served, or stored.
- **Pick the right pet for your family.**
 - Hedgehogs and other small pets are not recommended for children under 5 years old, adults over 65, or people with weakened immune systems, because they are at a greater risk for serious illness from germs that pets can carry.
 - Hedgehog breeders, pet stores, or others that sell or display hedgehogs should provide [educational materials](#) to customers interested in purchasing a hedgehog and employees who handle these animals.

Symptoms of *Salmonella* Infection

- Most people infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps 12 to 72 hours after being exposed to the bacteria.
- The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without treatment.

- In some people, the illness may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized. *Salmonella* infection may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and then to other places in the body.
- Children younger than 5 years, adults 65 years and older, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.

Investigation Details

October 2, 2019

CDC and public health officials in several states investigated a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium infections linked to contact with pet hedgehogs.

A total of 54 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium were reported from 23 states. A list of the states and the number of cases in each can be found on the [map of reported cases page](#).

Illnesses started on dates from [October 22, 2018, to August 21, 2019](#). Ill people ranged in age from 2 to 95 years, with a median age of 18 years. Sixty-seven percent were female. Of 30 people with information available, 8 (24%) were hospitalized. No deaths were reported.

[Whole genome sequencing](#) (WGS) was performed on 59 isolates from 42 ill people and 17 hedgehogs. Analysis of WGS did not predict antibiotic resistance in isolates from 41 people and 17 hedgehogs. One isolate from one ill person had predicted resistance to ampicillin. Testing of 11 clinical isolates using standard [antibiotic susceptibility testing](#) methods by CDC's [National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System \(NARMS\)](#) showed no resistance. If antibiotics are needed, this resistance profile should not affect the choice of antibiotic used to treat most people.

Investigation of the Outbreak

In interviews, ill people answered questions about animal contact in the week before they became ill. Of 37 people interviewed, 31 (84%) reported contact with hedgehogs before becoming ill. Ill people reported buying hedgehogs from various sources, including pet stores, breeders, or online.

The outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium was identified in samples collected from 11 hedgehogs in Minnesota and Oregon, including hedgehogs from the homes of six ill people. The outbreak strain was also identified in two samples collected from hedgehog habitats in Michigan. A single, common source of hedgehogs was not identified.

Regardless of where hedgehogs are purchased, they can carry *Salmonella* germs that can make people sick. People who own or come in contact with hedgehogs can take [steps to stay healthy around their pet](#).

As of October 2, 2019, this investigation is over.