

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Peaches, Nectarines, and Plums



Food Safety Alert

Posted November 20, 2023

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 11
- Hospitalizations: 10
- Deaths: 1
- [States](#): 7
- Recall: Yes
- Investigation status: Active

Recalled Food

Whole peaches, nectarines, and plums distributed by HMC Farms

- Sold in stores nationwide between May 1 and November 15 in 2022 and 2023
- Sold in 2lb bags branded “HMC Farms” or “Signature Farms”
- Also sold as individual fruit with a sticker that has “USA-E-U” and a number
 - Yellow peach: 4044 or 4038
 - White peach: 4401
 - Yellow nectarine: 4036 or 4378
 - White nectarine: 3035
 - Red plum: 4042
 - Black plum: 4040
- Conventional fruit (not organic)
- See [recall notice](#) for product images

Investigators are working to determine if any additional fruit or products made with this fruit may be contaminated.

What You Should Do

- **Do not eat any recalled peaches, nectarines, and plums.**
 - Check your home, including your refrigerator and freezer, for any recalled fruit.
 - If you think you have any, throw them away or return them to the store.
- **Clean your refrigerator, containers, and surfaces** that may have touched the recalled fruit.
 - *Listeria* can survive in the refrigerator and can easily spread to other foods and surfaces.
- **Call a healthcare provider right away** if you have these symptoms after eating recalled fruit:
 - **Pregnant people** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness.
 - **People who are not pregnant** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness. They may also get a headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or seizures.

What Businesses Should Do

- **Do not sell or serve** recalled fruit or food made with recalled fruit.
- **Follow FDA's safe handling and cleaning advice** if you sold or served recalled fruit.

Listeria Symptoms

- *Listeria* is especially harmful to people who are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or with weakened immune systems. This is because *Listeria* is more likely to spread beyond their gut to other parts of their body, resulting in a severe condition known as invasive listeriosis.
 - **For people who are pregnant,** *Listeria* can cause pregnancy loss, premature birth, or a life-threatening infection in their newborn.
 - **For people who are 65 years or older or who have a weakened immune system,** *Listeria* often results in hospitalization and sometimes death.
- Symptoms usually start within 2 weeks after eating food contaminated with *Listeria*, but may start as early as the same day or as late as 10 weeks after.
 - **Pregnant people** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness.

- **People who are not pregnant** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness. They may also get a headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or seizures.

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 HMC Farms peaches, nectarines, and plums may be contaminated with *Listeria* and are making people sick.

Epidemiologic Data

As of November 17, 11 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Listeria* have been reported from seven states. Sick people's samples were collected from August 22, 2018, to August 16, 2023. Of ten people with information available, all have been hospitalized. One person got sick during their pregnancy and had a preterm labor. One death has been reported from California.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely higher than the number reported, and the outbreak may not be limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because some people recover without medical care and are not tested for *Listeria*. In addition, recent illnesses may not yet be reported as it usually takes [3 to 4 weeks](#) to determine if a sick person is part of an outbreak.

Public health officials collect many different types of information from sick people or their family, including their age, race, ethnicity, other demographics, and the foods they ate in the month before they got sick. This

information provides clues to help investigators identify the source of the outbreak.

The table below has information about sick people in this outbreak (“n” is the number of people with information available for each demographic).

Table of demographic information (n is the number of people with information available)

Demographics	Information
Age (n=11)	Range from 30 to 80 years Median age of 69 73% are 65 years or older
Sex (n=11)	64% Male 36% Female
Race (n=10)	80% White 10% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 10% reported more than one race
Ethnicity (n=9)	89% non-Hispanic 11% Hispanic

State and local public health officials are interviewing people about the foods they ate in the month before they got sick. Of the seven people interviewed, all (100%) reported eating peaches, nectarines, or plums.

CDC conducted a [case-case analysis](#), comparing foods reported by people in this outbreak to foods reported by people who got sick with *Listeria* but were not part of an outbreak. The analysis showed that people in this outbreak were 18 times more likely to eat peaches, nectarines, or plums ($p<0.001$) than sick people not in this outbreak. This suggests that peaches, nectarines, and plums are a likely source of this outbreak.

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 suggests that people in this outbreak got sick from the same food.

On October 23, FDA collected a sample of HMC Farms peaches for testing and found *Listeria* in it. On November 6, WGS showed that the *Listeria* in the peaches are closely related to bacteria from sick people. This means that people likely got sick from eating these peaches.

Public Health Actions

On November 17, HMC Farms [recalled](#) whole peaches, plums, and nectarines sold in stores between May 1 and November 15 in 2022 and 2023. CDC is advising people not to eat, sell, or serve recalled fruit.