

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Peaches, Nectarines, and Plums



Food Safety Alert

Posted January 30, 2024

This outbreak is over. Stay up to date on food recalls and outbreaks to avoid getting sick from eating contaminated food. Always follow these steps to enjoy safe fruits and vegetables.

Fast Facts

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

Outbreak Investigation Summary

[Data](#) showed that whole peaches, nectarines, and plums distributed by HMC Farms made people in this outbreak sick.

- Of the seven people interviewed, all (100%) reported eating peaches, nectarines or plums.
- The outbreak strain of *Listeria* was found in a sample of HMC Farms peaches. WGS showed that the *Listeria* in the peaches were closely related to bacteria from sick people.

Recalled Food

Recalled peaches, nectarines, and plums are no longer available for sale and the use-by dates have passed. All recalls that resulted from this investigation are listed on [FDA's recall website](#).

What You Should Do

Stay Healthy and 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.

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) investigated a multistate outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* infections.

Epidemiologic and laboratory data showed that HMC Farms peaches, nectarines, and plums might be contaminated with *Listeria* and made people sick.

As of January 30, 2024, this outbreak is over.

Epidemiologic Data

A total of 11 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Listeria* were reported from seven states (see [map](#)). Sick people’s samples were collected from August 22, 2018, to August 16, 2023 (see [timeline](#)). Of 10 people with information available, all were hospitalized. One person got sick during their pregnancy and had preterm labor. One death was reported from California.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak was 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*.

Public health officials collected 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 provided 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 82 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 interviewed 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 suggested that peaches, nectarines, and plums were a likely source of this outbreak.

Laboratory Data

Public health investigators used the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that might 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 were closely related genetically. This suggested that people in this outbreak got sick from the same food.

On October 23, 2023, FDA collected a sample of HMC Farms peaches for testing and found *Listeria* in it. On November 6, 2023, WGS showed that the *Listeria* in the peaches were closely related to bacteria from sick people. This means that people likely got sick from eating those peaches.

Public Health Actions

On November 17, 2023, HMC Farms [recalled](#) whole peaches, plums, and nectarines sold in stores between May 1 and November 15 in 2022 and 2023.