

Multistate Outbreak of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* Infections Linked to Fresh Crab Meat Imported from Venezuela (Final Update)

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This outbreak investigation is over. However, *Vibrio* is an important cause of illness in the United States. For information on steps people can take to reduce their risk of *Vibrio* infection from crab meat, read the [Advice to Consumers, Restaurants, and Retailers](#).

Highlights

- [Read the Advice to Consumers, Restaurants, and Retailers >](#)
- CDC, state and local health officials, and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) investigated a multistate outbreak of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infections linked to eating fresh crab meat imported from Venezuela.
 - 26 people with *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infection were reported from seven states and the District of Columbia.
 - 9 (36%) of the 25 people with information available were hospitalized.
 - No deaths were reported.
- Illnesses began from April 1, 2018, to July 19, 2018.
- [Epidemiologic, traceback, and laboratory evidence](#) indicated that fresh crab meat imported from Venezuela was the likely source.

Outbreak Summary

Introduction

CDC, state and local health officials, and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) investigated a multistate outbreak of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infections linked to eating fresh crab meat imported from Venezuela. This crab meat was labeled as “fresh” or “pre-cooked” and was a ready-to-eat product. Public health investigators used the [PulseNet](#) system to help identify illnesses that might have been part of this outbreak. PulseNet is the national subtyping network of public health and food regulatory agency laboratories coordinated by CDC. DNA fingerprinting is performed on *Vibrio* bacteria isolated from ill people by using techniques called [pulsed-field gel electrophoresis](#) (PFGE) and [whole genome sequencing](#).

(WGS). CDC PulseNet manages a national database of these DNA fingerprints to identify possible outbreaks. WGS gives a more detailed DNA fingerprint than PFGE.

Illnesses began from April 1 to July 19, 2018. Ill people ranged in age from 26 to 78 years, with a median age of 55. Among ill people, 54% are male. Among people with available information, 9 (36%) were hospitalized. No deaths were reported.

Investigation of the Outbreak

[Epidemiologic, laboratory, and traceback evidence](#) indicated that crab meat labeled as fresh or precooked and imported from Venezuela was making people sick.

In interviews, ill people answered questions about the foods they ate and other exposures in the week before they became ill. Of the 24 people interviewed, 22 (92%) reported eating crab meat in homes or restaurants.

State and local health officials collected information from restaurants and grocery stores where ill people reported buying fresh crab meat. FDA and regulatory officials in Maryland traced back the source of the crab meat from restaurants and grocery stores and identified multiple Venezuelan suppliers. The investigation did not identify a single firm as the only supplier of crab meat linked to the outbreak.

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) [warned Maryland residents](#) on July 6, 2018, not to eat any fresh lump crab meat imported from Venezuela. MDH investigators collected unopened containers of crab meat from several stores where ill people reported buying lump crab meat. Multiple samples from several brands contained *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*. However, [whole genome sequencing](#) showed that isolates of *Vibrio* from the crab meat were not genetically related to the outbreak strain.

As a result of the outbreak investigation, FDA increased testing of fresh crab meat from Venezuela. FDA testing did not find *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in any samples tested, but did find *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria. That contaminated crab meat was not allowed to be sold in the United States.

This outbreak investigation is over.