

Outbreak of *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Pet Hedgehogs

Final Update



Investigation Notice

Posted January 13, 2021 at 1:00 PM ET

This outbreak investigation is over. Although the investigation is over, people can still get a *Salmonella* infection from hedgehogs. Always take steps to stay healthy around pet hedgehogs.

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

Final Outbreak Information

At A Glance

- [Reported Cases](#): 49
 - [States](#): 25
 - Hospitalizations: 11
 - Deaths: 0
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- As of January 11, 2021, a total of 49 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium were reported from 25 states.
 - 11 ill people were hospitalized, and no deaths were reported.
 - 14 ill people were children younger than 5.
 - [Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence](#) showed that contact with pet hedgehogs was the likely source of this outbreak.
 - In interviews, 30 (83%) of 36 ill people reported contact with a hedgehog before getting sick.
 - The outbreak strain making people sick was identified in samples collected from a hedgehog habitat in the home of an ill person in California and from hedgehogs in the homes of ill people in New York and North Dakota.

- This outbreak strain is the same as outbreak strains linked to hedgehogs [in 2012](#) and [in 2019](#). The Public Health Agency of Canada also recently investigated an outbreak with the same strain that was linked to hedgehogs.
- This outbreak investigation is over. CDC will continue to work with state public health partners to monitor for *Salmonella* infections linked to contact with pet hedgehogs.

Advice to Pet Owners

Hedgehogs can carry *Salmonella* germs in their droppings even if they look healthy and clean. These germs can easily spread to their bodies, habitats, and anything in the area where they live.

You can get sick from touching your hedgehog or anything in its environment and then touching your mouth or face and swallowing *Salmonella* germs.

Take these steps to [stay healthy around pet hedgehogs](#):

- **Wash your hands**
 - Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching or feeding your hedgehog and after touching or cleaning the area where it lives and roams.
 - Adults should make sure young children are washing their hands properly.
- **Play safely**
 - Don't kiss or snuggle your hedgehog, or eat or drink around it. This can spread *Salmonella* germs to your mouth and make you sick.
 - Keep your hedgehog out of your kitchen and other areas where you eat, store, or prepare food.
- **Keep things clean**
 - Clean items you use to care for your hedgehog outside the house, if possible. These items may include its cage, toys, and food and water containers.
 - If you clean these items indoors, don't clean them in the kitchen or other areas where you eat or prepare food. Use a laundry sink or bathtub, and thoroughly clean and disinfect the area right after.

If you are thinking of getting a pet hedgehog:

- **Check your local laws**
 - Make sure having a pet hedgehog is legal where you live. Some states do not allow hedgehogs as pets.
- **Pick the right pet for your family**
 - Hedgehogs are not recommended for children younger than 5, adults aged 65 and older, and [people with weakened immune systems](#). These people are more likely to get a serious illness from germs that hedgehogs can carry.

Advice to Hedgehog Breeders and Stores that Sell or Display Hedgehogs

- Educate customers about how to stay healthy around hedgehogs
 - Display information by the hedgehog area and hand out educational materials to customers who are buying a hedgehog.
- Learn more about how to protect your customers and employees from *Salmonella* infection and other diseases shared between animals and humans
 - Read the CDC's 2017 Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings.

Symptoms of *Salmonella* Infection

- Most people infected with *Salmonella* germs develop diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps 6 hours to 6 days 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, adults aged 65 and older, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.

Investigation Details

January 13, 2021

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

Public health investigators used the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that may be 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 *Salmonella* bacteria isolated from ill people by using a standardized laboratory and data analysis method called [whole genome sequencing](#) (WGS). CDC PulseNet manages a national database of these sequences that are used to identify possible outbreaks. WGS gives investigators detailed information about the bacteria causing illness. In this investigation, WGS showed that bacteria isolated from ill people were closely related genetically. This means that people in this outbreak were more likely to share a common source of infection.

As of January 11, 2021, a total of 49 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium were reported from 25 states.

Illnesses started on dates ranging from [April 12, 2020, to November 24, 2020](#). Ill people ranged in age from less than 1 year to 61 years, with a median age of 11, and 14 ill people were children younger than 5. Of all ill people, 57% were female. Of 42 ill people with information available, 11 (26%) were hospitalized. No deaths were reported.

WGS analysis of 54 bacterial isolates from ill people did not predict any antibiotic resistance. Testing of three outbreak isolates using standard [antibiotic susceptibility testing](#) by CDC's [National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System \(NARMS\)](#) laboratory also showed no resistance.

Investigation of the Outbreak

[Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence](#) showed that contact with pet hedgehogs was the likely source of this outbreak.

In interviews, people answered questions about animal contact in the week before they got sick. Of 36 people interviewed, 30 (83%) reported contact with hedgehogs before getting sick. They reported buying hedgehogs from various places, including pet stores, breeders, and online stores. A single, common supplier was not identified.

The outbreak strain making people sick was identified in samples collected from a hedgehog habitat in the home of an ill person in California and from hedgehogs in the homes of ill people in New York and North Dakota.

This outbreak strain is the same as outbreak strains linked to hedgehogs [in 2012](#) and [in 2019](#). The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) also recently investigated an outbreak with the same strain that was linked to pet hedgehogs.

Hedgehogs can carry *Salmonella* germs that can make people sick even if they look healthy and clean. Hedgehog owners should always follow [steps to stay healthy around their pet hedgehog](#).

This outbreak investigation is over. CDC will continue to work with state public health partners to monitor for *Salmonella* infections linked to contact with pet hedgehogs.