

Outbreak of *Salmonella* Newport Infections Linked to Onions



Food Safety Alert

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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are investigating a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Newport infections linked to onions.

Recall and Advice to Consumers, Restaurants, and Retailers

At A Glance

- [Reported Cases](#): 396
- [States](#): 34
- Hospitalizations: 59
- Deaths: 0
- Recall: Yes



Do not eat, serve, or sell recalled onions from Thomson International, Inc., or food made with these onions. Onion types include red, white, yellow, and sweet yellow varieties.

- **At home, check your refrigerator and kitchen** for recalled onions or foods made with them, such as salads, wraps, tacos, sandwiches, etc.
 - Check the package or look for a sticker on the onion to see if it is from Thomson International, Inc., or one of the brand names below. If it is, don't eat it. Throw it away.

- **Other brand names that may be on labels include:** Thomson Premium, TLC Thomson International, Tender Loving Care, El Competitor, Hartley's Best, Onions 52, Majestic, Imperial Fresh, Kroger, Utah Onions and Food Lion.
 - **See the recall notice** to check for further details and pictures of the products.
- If you can't tell where your onions are from, don't eat them. Throw them away.
- If you used onions to make any other food and don't know where the onions were from, don't eat the food. Throw it away, even if no one got sick.
- Wash and sanitize any surfaces that may have come in contact with onions or their packaging, such as countertops, refrigerator drawers, knives, and cutting boards.
- **When you eat out or shop for food, check with restaurants and grocery stores** to make sure they are not serving or selling recalled onions from Thomson International, Inc., or foods prepared with them, such as salads, sandwiches, wraps, salsas, and dips.
 - If they don't know where their onions are from, don't buy the product.
 - People sickened in this outbreak reported eating raw onions in freshly prepared foods, including salads, sandwiches, wraps, salsas, and dips.

Advice to Restaurants, Retailers, and Suppliers

- On August 1, 2020, Thomson International, Inc., voluntarily recalled red, yellow, white, and sweet yellow onions because they may be contaminated with *Salmonella*.
 - Onions were distributed to wholesalers, restaurants, and retail stores in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
 - Onions were distributed in bulk cartons and mesh sacks ranging from 2 to 50 pounds under these brand names: Thomson Premium, TLC Thomson International, Tender Loving Care, El Competitor, Hartley's Best, Onions 52, Majestic, Imperial Fresh, Kroger, Utah Onions, and Food Lion.
 - **See the recall to check for universal product codes (UPC) and pictures of the products.**
- **Restaurants and retailers** should not serve or sell recalled onions from Thomson International, Inc., or food prepared with these onions.
 - If you don't know where your onions are from, don't serve or sell them.
 - Clean and sanitize all surfaces that onions have come in contact with, including cutting boards, countertops, slicers, utensils, and storage bins.
- **Suppliers, distributors, and others in the supply chain** should not ship or sell recalled onions from Thomson International, Inc.

- Suppliers and distributors that repackage raw onions should clean and sanitize any surfaces and storage bins that may have come in contact with recalled onions.

Take these steps if you have symptoms of a *Salmonella* infection:

- Talk to your healthcare provider.
- Write down what you ate in the week before you started to get sick.
- Report your illness to your local health department.
 - The health department will likely call you for an interview to ask you about foods you ate in the week before you got sick.
- Assist public health investigators by answering their questions when they contact you.

Symptoms of *Salmonella* Infection

- Most people infected with *Salmonella* 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 years, adults 65 years and older, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.
- For more information, see [Symptoms of Salmonella Infection](#).

Latest Outbreak Information

- On August 1, 2020, Thomson International, Inc., voluntarily recalled red, yellow, white, and sweet yellow onions because they may be contaminated with *Salmonella*.
- A total of 396 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Newport have been reported from 34 states.
 - 59 hospitalizations have been reported. No deaths have been reported.
- [Epidemiologic and traceback](#) information showed that red onions are a likely source of this outbreak.
 - The traceback information collected identified Thomson International, Inc., of Bakersfield, Calif., as a likely source of red onions in this outbreak. Due to the way onions are grown and harvested, other types of onions, such as white, yellow, or sweet yellow, may also be contaminated.
 - Additional traceback is ongoing to determine if other onions are linked to the outbreak.

- The [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#) is investigating an outbreak of *Salmonella* Newport infections, which is related by whole genome sequencing to this outbreak in the United States. Officials in Canada have identified red onions imported from the United States as a likely source of their outbreak.
- This investigation is ongoing. CDC will provide more information as it becomes available.

Investigation Details

August 3, 2020

As of July 29, 2020, a total of 396 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Newport have been reported from 34 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 ranging from [June 19, 2020, to July 12, 2020](#). Ill people range in age from less than 1 to 102 years, with a median age of 39. Fifty-two percent of ill people are female. Of 236 ill people with information available, 59 hospitalizations have been reported. No deaths have been reported.

Illnesses might not yet be reported due to the time it takes between when a person becomes ill and when the illness is reported. This takes an average of 2 to 4 weeks. Please see the [Timeline for Reporting Cases of *Salmonella* Infection](#) for more details.

Whole genome sequencing analysis of 48 isolates from ill people did not predict any antibiotic resistance. Standard [antibiotic susceptibility testing](#) by CDC's [National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System \(NARMS\)](#) laboratory is underway.

Whole genome sequencing analysis shows that an outbreak of *Salmonella* Newport infections in Canada is related genetically to this outbreak in the United States. This means that people in both of these outbreaks are likely to share a common source of infection.

Investigation of the Outbreak

On July 10, 2020, [CDC PulseNet](#) identified an outbreak of 13 *Salmonella* Newport infections in three states. Since being identified, the outbreak has rapidly grown to a total of 396 infections in 34 states.

State and local public health officials are interviewing ill people to determine what they ate and other exposures in the week before their illness started.

Many ill people were identified as part of illness clusters. An illness cluster is defined as two or more people who do not live in the same household who report eating at the same restaurant location, attending a common event, or shopping at the same location of a grocery store in the week before becoming ill. Investigating

illness clusters can provide critical clues about the source of an outbreak. If several unrelated ill people ate or shopped at the same location of a restaurant or store within several days of each other, it suggests that the contaminated food item was served or sold there. Twenty-two illness clusters have been identified in seven states. Information from these clusters shows that many ill people ate red onions. The traceback information collected from these illness clusters identified Thomson International, Inc., of Bakersfield, Calif., as a likely source of red onions. Due to the way onions are grown and harvested, other onion types, such as, white, yellow or sweet yellow, may also be contaminated. Additional traceback is ongoing to determine if other onions are linked to the outbreak.

PHAC is investigating an outbreak of *Salmonella* Newport infections in Canada that is related by whole genome sequencing to the U.S. outbreak. On July 30, PHAC's outbreak investigation identified U.S. red onions as a likely source of its outbreak.

On August 1, 2020, Thomson International, Inc., voluntarily recalled red, yellow, white, and sweet yellow onions because they may be contaminated with *Salmonella*.

Consumers, restaurants, and retailers should not eat, serve, or sell recalled onions from Thomson International, Inc., of Bakersfield, Calif.

CDC will provide updates when more information is available.