

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Ice Cream



Food Safety Alert

Posted November 2, 2022

This outbreak is over. Stay up to date on food recalls and outbreaks to avoid getting sick from eating contaminated food.

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 28
- Hospitalizations: 27
- Deaths: 1
- [States](#): 11
- Recall: Yes
- Investigation status: Closed



Recalled Food

- The recalled ice cream was sold or served at Big Olaf retailers, restaurants, and senior homes in Florida, and in one location in Fredericksburg, Ohio.
- All flavors, lots, and expiration dates through 6/30/2022 of Big Olaf brand ice cream products have been recalled.
- Big Olaf brand ice cream was sold to consumers in plastic pint-size containers and plastic half gallon containers. The ice cream was sold to independent retail stores in plastic 2.5-gallon scoopable tubs.

What You Should Do

Check your freezer for recalled ice cream. If you have any left:

- Do not eat the recalled products. Throw them away or return them to where you bought them.
- Follow these [five steps](#) to clean any areas, containers, and surfaces that may have touched the recalled products. *Listeria* can survive in the freezer and can easily spread to other foods and surfaces.
- Call your healthcare provider right away if you have these symptoms after eating recalled products.
 - If you are pregnant: Fever and muscle aches. Your illness may be mild, but *Listeria* can cause pregnancy loss or premature birth. It can also cause serious illness or death in newborns.
 - If you are not pregnant: Headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, and convulsions, in addition to fever and muscle aches.

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.

What Businesses Should Do

- Do not serve or sell recalled products.
- Follow [USDA-FSIS guidance](#) to prevent the spread and growth of *Listeria*.

Investigation Details

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The Florida Department of Health, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 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, laboratory, and traceback data showed that Big Olaf Creamery ice cream made people sick.

As of November 2, 2022, this outbreak is over.

Epidemiologic Data

A total of 28 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* were reported from 11 states. Fourteen sick people were residents of Florida, and 11 reported traveling to Florida before getting sick.

Sick people's samples were collected from January 24, 2021, to August 19, 2022. Sick people ranged in age from less than 1 to 92 years, with a median age of 62, and 50% were female. Of the 28 sick people, 27 were hospitalized. One death was reported from Illinois.

Seven illnesses were among pregnant people or newborns. One illness resulted in a pregnancy loss.

The true number of sick people in an 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 interviewed people about the foods they ate before they got sick. Of the 23 people interviewed, all reported eating ice cream, and 16 reported eating Big Olaf Creamery brand ice cream or eating ice cream at locations that have been supplied by Big Olaf Creamery. Ten ill people were identified as part of four illness clusters in this outbreak. An illness cluster is defined as two or more people who do not live in the same household who report eating food from the same retail location before getting sick. If several unrelated sick people ate food from the same retail location, it suggests that the contaminated food item was served or sold there. All four illness clusters were retail locations that sold Big Olaf Creamery ice cream.

Laboratory and Traceback Data

Public health investigators used the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that were 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 suggests that people in this outbreak got sick from the same food.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) collected samples of ice cream and environmental samples from the ice cream production area at the Big Olaf Creamery facility in Sarasota, Florida. FDACS also performed WGS on these samples, and the Florida Department of Health identified the outbreak strain in the samples collected from the ice cream and the environment.

Public Health Actions

On July 2, 2022, CDC advised people who had Big Olaf Creamery ice cream at home to throw away any remaining product. On July 13, 2022, Big Olaf Creamery LLC recalled all flavors, lots, and expiration dates of Big Olaf brand ice cream through June 30, 2022.