

Public Health Notice: Outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to frozen whole kernel corn

December 21, 2021: Updated Notice

This notice has been updated to communicate the source of the outbreak and reflect 5 additional illnesses that have been reported in the ongoing outbreak investigation. There are now 84 *Salmonella* illnesses reported across 5 provinces. Based on the investigation findings to date, the outbreak is linked to Alasko brand frozen whole kernel corn.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) issued food recall warnings on December 14 and 19 for frozen whole kernel corn imported by New Alasko Limited Partnership. Some of these products were possibly distributed nationally. This led to a secondary recall for Fraser Valley Meats brand frozen whole kernel corn on December 18. Additional food recall warnings in Canada are possible. More information on recalled products is available online.

Do not eat, use, sell, or serve any recalled Alasko brand or Fraser Valley Meats brand frozen whole kernel corn. This advice applies to individuals, as well as retailers, distributors, manufacturers and food service establishments such as hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, hospitals and long-term care homes, across Canada.

Why you should take note

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is collaborating with provincial public health partners, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Health Canada to investigate an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections involving 5 provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. The illnesses reported in Ontario were related to travel to Alberta and British Columbia.

Many of the individuals who became sick reported eating a variety of raw and cooked produce items before their illness. Initially, investigators identified that fresh avocados were reported by many cases before they became ill; however, more information was needed to confirm the source of the outbreak.

As part of the food safety investigation, the CFIA collected different food items from restaurants where ill people dined. Testing found the outbreak strain of

Salmonella in an unopened package of Alasko brand frozen whole kernel corn. Traceback findings identified Alasko as the common brand of frozen corn consumed at various food service establishments by individuals who became sick. Based on the investigation findings to date, the outbreak is linked to Alasko brand frozen whole kernel corn.

The CFIA issued food recall warnings on December 14 and 19 for Alasko brand frozen whole kernel corn. The recalled products were distributed in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec, and may have been distributed in other provinces and territories. This led to a secondary recall for Fraser Valley Meats brand frozen whole kernel corn on December 18. More information on the recalled products are available online.. The CFIA is continuing its food safety investigation, which may lead to the recall of other products. If other products are recalled, the CFIA will notify the public through updated food recall warnings.

The outbreak appears to be ongoing, as recent illnesses continue to be reported. **Do not eat, use, sell, or serve recalled Alasko brand or Fraser Valley Meats brand frozen whole kernel corn. This advice applies to individuals, as well as retailers, distributors, manufacturers and food service establishments such as hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, hospitals and long-term care homes, across Canada.**

This outbreak is an important reminder to Canadians and businesses that frozen vegetables can carry harmful germs that can lead to foodborne illness if not properly handled and cooked prior to consuming.

This public health notice will be updated as the investigation evolves.

Investigation summary

As of December 21, there have been 84 laboratory-confirmed cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis illness investigated in: British Columbia (36), Alberta (30), Saskatchewan (4), Manitoba (12) and Ontario (2). The illnesses reported in Ontario are related to travel to Alberta and British Columbia.

Individuals became sick between early September 2021 and late November 2021. Four individuals have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Individuals who became ill are between 5 and 89 years of age. The majority of cases (64%) are female.

The CFIA issued food recall warnings on December 14 and 19 for Alasko brand frozen whole kernel corn; and a secondary recall for Fraser Valley Meats brand frozen whole kernel corn on December 18. The CFIA is continuing its food safety investigation, which may lead to the recall of other products. If other products are recalled, the CFIA will notify the public through updated food recall warnings.

Who is most at risk

Anyone can become sick with a *Salmonella* infection, but [young children](#), [the elderly](#), [pregnant women](#) or [people with weakened immune systems](#) are at higher risk for contracting serious illness.

Most people who become ill from a *Salmonella* infection will recover fully after a few days. It is possible for some people to be infected with the bacteria and to not get sick or show any symptoms, but to still be able to spread the infection to others.

What you should do to protect your health

The following advice applies to individuals, as well as retailers, distributors, manufacturers and food service establishments such as hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, hospitals and long-term care homes, across Canada:

- Do not eat, use, sell or serve any recalled Alasko brand or Fraser Valley Meats brand frozen whole kernel corn.
- Clean and sanitize all surfaces and storage areas that recalled Alasko brand or Fraser Valley Meats brand frozen whole kernel corn may have come in contact with, including countertops, containers, utensils, freezers, and refrigerators.
- If you have been diagnosed with a *Salmonella* infection or any other gastrointestinal illness, do not cook food for other people.

For general use of frozen vegetables, including frozen corn, the following tips will also help reduce your risk of becoming ill:

- Frozen vegetables are not ready to eat products. Always remember to cook frozen vegetables according to the package directions.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling frozen vegetables.
- Wash and sanitize any surfaces that may have come in contact with frozen vegetables and its packaging, such as countertops, containers, utensils, freezers, and refrigerators.

Symptoms

Symptoms of a *Salmonella* infection, called salmonellosis, typically start 6 to 72 hours after exposure to *Salmonella* bacteria from an infected animal or contaminated product.

Symptoms include:

- fever
- chills
- diarrhea
- abdominal cramps
- headache
- nausea
- vomiting

These symptoms usually last for 4 to 7 days. In healthy people, salmonellosis often clears up without treatment, but sometimes antibiotics may be required. In some cases, severe illness may occur and hospitalization may be required. People who are infected with *Salmonella* bacteria can be infectious from several days to several weeks.

People who experience symptoms, or who have underlying medical conditions, should contact their health care provider if they suspect they have a *Salmonella* infection.

What the Government of Canada is doing

The Government of Canada is committed to protecting the health of Canadians from enteric disease outbreaks.

PHAC leads the human health investigation into an outbreak and is in regular contact with its federal, provincial and territorial partners to monitor the situation and to collaborate on steps to address an outbreak.

Health Canada provides food-related health risk assessments to determine whether the presence of a certain substance or microorganism poses a health risk to consumers.

CFIA conducts food safety investigations into the possible food source of an outbreak.

Epidemiological information

[Figure 1](#) is an epidemiological curve for this outbreak, which shows the numbers of new cases by week. Outbreak investigators use this information to show when illnesses begin, when they peak, and when they trail off. It can take several weeks from the time a person becomes ill to when the illness is reported and testing confirms a link to the outbreak. Data are available for 84 cases.

Figure 1. Number of people infected with *Salmonella* Enteritidis

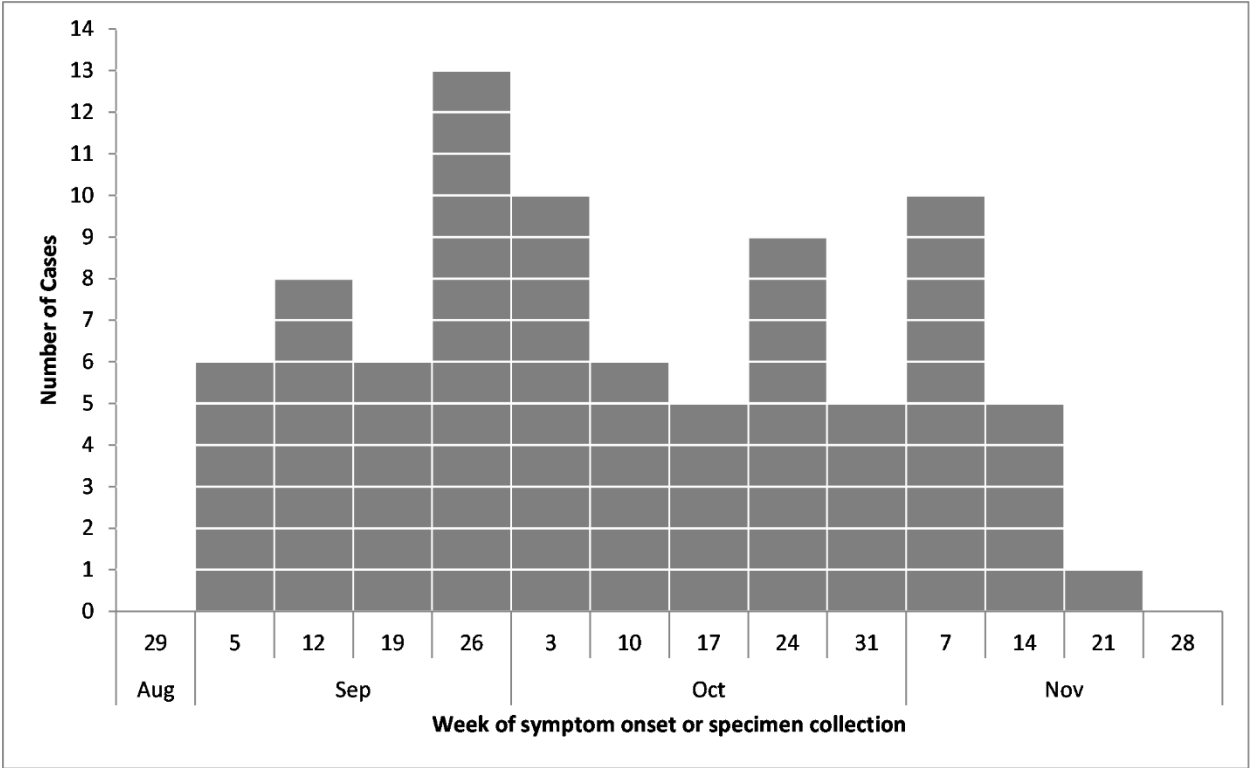


Figure 1: Text description

Investigation history

Public Health Notice: December 9, 2021

This notice has been updated to reflect 16 additional cases that have been reported in the ongoing outbreak investigation. There are now 79 *Salmonella* illnesses reported across 5 provinces.

Why you should take note

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is collaborating with provincial public health partners, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Health Canada to investigate an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections involving five provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The illnesses reported in Ontario were related to travel to Alberta and British Columbia.

The source of the outbreak has not been confirmed and the investigation is ongoing. Many of the individuals who became sick reported eating fresh avocados purchased from grocery stores or served at restaurants before their illness. Investigation findings to date have identified that these avocados have been distributed in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. More information is needed to confirm the source of the outbreak. The outbreak appears to be ongoing, as illnesses continue to be reported.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is issuing this public health notice to inform residents and businesses in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba of the investigation findings to date so that they can make informed decisions. At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that residents in other provinces and territories are affected by this outbreak. This notice also includes important safe food handling information for Canadians and businesses that may help prevent further *Salmonella* infections.

This public health notice will be updated as the investigation evolves.

Investigation summary

As of December 9, there have been 79 laboratory-confirmed cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis illness investigated in: British Columbia (34), Alberta (28), Saskatchewan (4), Manitoba (11) and Ontario (2). The illnesses reported in Ontario are related to travel to Alberta and British Columbia. Individuals became sick between early

September 2021 and mid-November 2021. Four individuals have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Individuals who became ill are between 5 and 89 years of age. The majority of cases (63%) are female.

CFIA is conducting a food safety investigation. If specific contaminated food products are identified, they will take the necessary steps to protect the public, including requesting a recall of product as required. Currently there are no Food Recall Warnings associated with this outbreak.

Public Health Notice: November 29, 2021

Why you should take note

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is collaborating with provincial public health partners, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Health Canada to investigate an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections involving five provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The illness reported in Ontario was related to travel to Alberta.

The source of the outbreak has not been identified and the investigation is ongoing. Outbreak investigators are gathering information on possible sources and possible ways contamination may have occurred. Many of the individuals who became sick reported eating fresh produce before their illness. However, more information is needed to determine the source of the outbreak. The outbreak appears to be ongoing, as illnesses continue to be reported.

Given the evolving nature of this outbreak, PHAC is issuing this public health notice to inform residents in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba of the investigation findings to date and to share important safe food handling practices to help prevent further *Salmonella* infections. At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that residents in other provinces and territories are affected by this outbreak.

This public health notice will be updated as the investigation evolves.

Investigation summary

As of November 29, there have been 63 laboratory-confirmed cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis illness investigated in: British Columbia (26), Alberta (21), Saskatchewan (4), Manitoba (11) and Ontario (1). The illness reported in Ontario was related to travel to Alberta. Individuals became sick between early September 2021 and early

November 2021. Three individuals have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Individuals who became ill are between 9 and 89 years of age. The majority of cases (63%) are female.

CFIA is conducting a food safety investigation. If contaminated food products are identified, they will take the necessary steps to protect the public, including recalling the product as required. Currently there are no Food Recall Warnings associated with this outbreak.

Public Health Notice: November 12, 2021

Why you should take note

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is collaborating with provincial public health partners, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Health Canada to investigate an outbreak of Salmonella infections involving five provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The illness reported in Ontario was related to travel to Alberta.

The source of the outbreak has not been identified and the investigation is ongoing. Outbreak investigators are gathering information on possible sources and possible ways contamination may have occurred. Many of the individuals who became sick reported eating fresh produce before their illness. However, more information is needed to determine the source of the outbreak. The outbreak appears to be ongoing, as illnesses continue to be reported.

Given the evolving nature of this outbreak, PHAC is issuing this public health notice to inform residents in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba of the investigation findings to date and to share important safe food handling practices to help prevent further Salmonella infections. At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that residents in other provinces and territories are affected by this outbreak.

This public health notice will be updated as the investigation evolves.

Investigation summary

As of November 10, there have been 46 laboratory-confirmed cases of Salmonella Enteritidis illness investigated in: British Columbia (18), Alberta (18), Saskatchewan (3), Manitoba (6) and Ontario (1). The illness reported in Ontario was related to travel to Alberta. Individuals became sick between early September 2021 and mid-

October 2021. Three individuals have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Individuals who became ill are between 9 and 89 years of age. The majority of cases (64%) were female.

CFIA is conducting a food safety investigation. If contaminated food products are identified, they will take the necessary steps to protect the public, including recalling the product as required. Currently there are no Food Recall Warnings associated with this outbreak.