

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Enoki Mushrooms

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Food Safety Alert

Posted January 18, 2023

Do not eat, sell, or serve recalled enoki mushrooms.

***Listeria* is especially harmful for people who are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system. If you are in any of these groups, do not eat *any* raw enoki mushrooms, even if they are not recalled.**

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 3
- Hospitalizations: 3
- Deaths: 0
- [States](#): 3
- Recall: Yes
- Investigation status: Active



Listeria in Enoki Mushrooms

Enoki mushrooms are white and have long, thin stems. They are often sold in a bunch with roots in sealed plastic packaging. They are popular in Japanese,

Chinese, and Korean food, and they are almost always eaten cooked in soups, hot pots, and stir-fried dishes.

In 2020, CDC investigated the [first known *Listeria* outbreak in the United States linked to enoki mushrooms](#). This outbreak resulted in three recalls of enoki mushrooms that were imported from Korea. Since then, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and public health officials from several states have been collecting samples of enoki mushrooms and found *Listeria* in many samples, resulting in more than 20 recalls of enoki mushrooms.

Recalled Food

Enoki mushrooms distributed by Utopia Foods

- Sold in plastic packaging that is clear on the top half and blue on the bottom
- "UTOPIA," "UTOPIA FOODS INC," and "200g" on packaging
- Bar code number 8928918610017

FDA found the outbreak strains of *Listeria* in an import sample of Utopia brand enoki mushrooms.

Investigators are working to identify any additional brands of enoki mushrooms that may be linked to this outbreak. To date, testing has identified *Listeria* in other brands of enoki mushrooms, but the *Listeria* found in those brands were not the outbreak strains.

What People at Higher Risk Should Do

Listeria is especially harmful if you are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system due to certain medical conditions or treatments. Other people can be infected with *Listeria*, but they rarely become seriously ill.

If you are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system:

- **Do not eat recalled enoki mushrooms.**
 - Throw them away or return them to where you bought them.
- **For all other brands of enoki mushrooms, do not eat them raw. Cook them thoroughly.**

- *Listeria* can grow on foods kept in the refrigerator, but it is easily killed by heating food to a high enough temperature.
- **Wash your hands after handling recalled or raw enoki mushrooms.**
 - [Clean](#) your refrigerator, containers, and surfaces that have touched recalled or raw enoki mushrooms.
 - *Listeria* can easily spread among food, surfaces, and hands.
- **Keep raw enoki mushrooms separate from foods that won't be cooked.**
 - This prevents the spread of *Listeria* germs from enoki mushrooms to foods that you won't cook before eating.
- **Call your healthcare provider right away** if you have any of these symptoms after eating enoki mushrooms:
 - **People who are not pregnant** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness. They may also get a headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or seizures.
 - **Pregnant people** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness. However, *Listeria* can cause pregnancy loss or premature birth. It can also cause serious illness or death in newborns.

What Everyone Else Should Do

- **Do not eat recalled enoki mushrooms.** Throw them away or return them to where you bought them.
- **Wash your hands** after handling recalled enoki mushrooms.
- **[Clean](#) your refrigerator, containers, and surfaces** that have touched recalled enoki mushrooms.

What Restaurants Should Do

- **Do not serve recalled or raw enoki mushrooms.**
 - Thoroughly cook enoki mushrooms that have not been recalled before serving them to customers.
 - Do not use raw enoki mushrooms as garnish.
 - Do not add raw enoki mushrooms on top of soup dishes right before serving. The enoki mushrooms will not get hot enough to kill *Listeria*.
- **Keep raw enoki mushrooms separate from foods that won't be cooked.**

- This prevents the spread of *Listeria* germs from enoki mushrooms to foods that you won't cook before serving to customers.
- **Follow [FDA's safe handling and cleaning advice](#) if you serve enoki mushrooms.**
 - Employees should wash hands after handling raw enoki mushrooms.

What Grocery Stores Should Do

- **Do not sell recalled enoki mushrooms.**

About *Listeria*

- *Listeria* is especially harmful to pregnant people, adults aged 65 or older, and people with weakened immune systems. This is because *Listeria* is more likely to spread beyond their gut to other parts of their body, resulting in a severe condition known as invasive listeriosis.
 - **For people who are pregnant**, *Listeria* can cause pregnancy loss, premature birth, or a life-threatening infection in their newborn.
 - **For people who are 65 years or older or have a weakened immune system**, *Listeria* often results in hospitalization and sometimes death.
- Symptoms usually start within 2 weeks after eating food contaminated with *Listeria*, but may start as early as the same day or as late as 10 weeks after.
 - **Pregnant people** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness.
 - **People who are not pregnant** usually have fever, muscle aches, and tiredness. They may also get a headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or seizures.

Investigation Details

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Epidemiologic and laboratory data show that enoki mushrooms are contaminated with *Listeria* and are making people sick.

FDA found two strains of *Listeria* in an import sample of Utopia Foods brand enoki mushrooms. One strain is linked to the two illnesses that were already included in this outbreak, and the other strain is linked to one additional illness. Both strains are now included in this outbreak investigation.

Epidemiologic Data

Since the last update on November 22, 2022, one more illness has been linked to this outbreak. As of January 18, 2023, three people infected with the outbreak strains of *Listeria* have been reported from three states (see [map](#)). Sick people's samples were collected from October 3, 2022, to October 8, 2022 (see [timeline](#)).

The true number of sick people in this 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 collect many different types of information from sick people, including their age, race, ethnicity, other demographics, and the foods they ate in the month before they got sick. This information provides clues to help investigators identify the source of the outbreak.

Sick people range in age from 30 to 56 years, with a median of 42 years, and 66% are male. Two people are Hispanic, and one person is Asian. All three have been hospitalized, and no deaths have been reported.

Two sick people reported eating enoki mushrooms or eating at restaurants with menu items containing enoki mushrooms. One patient did not report eating enoki mushrooms but reported shopping at various Asian grocery stores.

Laboratory Data

FDA found the outbreak strains of *Listeria* in an import sample of Utopia Foods brand enoki mushrooms.

Previously, in December 2022, Missouri state officials conducted routine sampling and found *Listeria* in a sample of Utopia Foods brand enoki mushrooms. The *Listeria* found in this sample was not the outbreak strains, and it was not linked to

any reported *Listeria* illness in the United States. On December 13, 2022, Utopia Foods [recalled](#) these enoki mushrooms.

Public Health Actions

On January 13, 2023, Utopia Foods [expanded their recall](#) of enoki mushrooms.

Do not eat, sell, or serve recalled enoki mushrooms. CDC also advises people who are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system to not eat any raw enoki mushrooms, even if they are not recalled. Instead, cook enoki mushrooms thoroughly before eating.