

Public Health Officials Warn about a Salmonella Outbreak Affecting NE Illinois

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CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is working with local health departments, the CDC and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS), to investigate an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to ground beef. A source of the ground beef has not yet been identified, but public health officials urge Illinois residents to follow safe food handling steps when preparing and eating ground beef. Ground beef should always be cooked to an [internal temperature of 160°F](#) before eating and the temperature should be checked with a food thermometer.

Illinois public health officials have identified 26 confirmed cases in Illinois. Cases are reported in Chicago as well as Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties. The illness onset dates of the cases ranged from April 25 to May 18. A small number of cases in other states are also under investigation by the CDC and state health departments.

IDPH is working with local health departments, the CDC and the USDA-FSIS to identify additional cases, to perform lab testing and to identify the source of the contaminated ground beef.

Some of the ill people reported eating undercooked ground beef. This outbreak, as well as the annual observance of [World Food Safety Day](#) today, highlight the importance of food safety. World Food Safety Day is an annual, worldwide event promoted in the United States by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration dedicated to reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses.

Salmonella can be found in a variety of foods, including beef, chicken, and pork. For this reason, it is important to follow proper hygiene for hands and utensils and to cook foods to the proper temperature. Always follow these four food safety steps to help prevent getting sick from *Salmonella*:

- Clean: Wash your hands, utensils, and surfaces often.
- Separate: Keep food that won’t be cooked separate from raw meat and poultry.
- Cook: Use a food thermometer to make sure you have cooked your food to a temperature high enough to kill germs. For ground beef, it should have a minimum internal temperature of 160°F.
- Chill: Refrigerate perishable food (food that goes bad) within 2 hours, or within 1 hour if food is exposed to temperatures above 90°F, like a hot car or a picnic. Thaw food in the refrigerator, not on the counter.

For more information on how to handle and prepare food safely to prevent food poisoning, click [HERE](#).

Symptoms of illness caused by *Salmonella* most commonly include diarrhea (that can be bloody), fever, and stomach cramps. Some people may also have nausea, vomiting, or a headache. If these symptoms are experienced six to 72 hours after eating potentially contaminated beef, people should contact a health care provider and let them know they have recently eaten beef. The symptoms can last for four to seven days.

Certain categories of people are more at risk for serious outcomes from *Salmonella* – these include children under the age of 5, adults over 65, those who have weakened immune systems, and those with certain types of heart or joint conditions. The public is urged protect close contacts in these categories from *Salmonella* transmission.

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