

Salmonella outbreak associated with Washington Care Center in Seattle

AT-A-GLANCE

- **Confirmed cases:** 29
- **Hospitalizations:** 6
- **Deaths:** 0
- **Status:** Investigation is complete
- **Location:** 2821 S Walden St, Seattle, WA 98144
- **Illness onset date range:** July 1, 2023 – July 5, 2023
- **Meal dates:** June 29 and June 30, 2023

Highlights

Posted August 2, 2023

Summary

Public Health investigated an outbreak of salmonellosis (caused by *Salmonella* bacteria) associated with Washington Care Center in Seattle. Washington Care Center is a long-term care facility that is typically not open to the general public. Based on the investigation, this outbreak was likely due to contaminated food served at the facility.

This outbreak appears to be over.

Illnesses

Public Health identified 29 people connected to Washington Care Center that developed one or more symptoms consistent with salmonellosis, including diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, and vomiting. Illness onset dates ranged from July 1, 2023, to July 5, 2023. No ill food workers were identified.

Public Health actions

On July 3, 2023, Washington Care Center reported the outbreak to Public Health. Public Health provided education to facility staff to prevent further spread of illness. This education included the importance of handwashing and effective cleaning and sanitation, as well as recommending sick residents and staff isolate until symptom-free for at least 24 hours. The facility stopped communal activities and dining from July 3, 2023, to July 7, 2023.

On July 11, 2023, Public Health, Washington State Department of Health (DOH), and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) visited the facility. Public Health conducted interviews with both sick and well people at the facility to identify potential common exposures. DOH inspected the kitchen and identified risk factors that could contribute to the spread of *Salmonella*, including potential cross-contamination, inadequate handwashing, and

improper glove use. DSHS, which regulates Washington State long-term care facilities like Washington Care Center, conducted its own investigation and provided education to Washington Care Center staff.

Laboratory testing

Eight of the 29 people who became sick had confirmatory testing indicating infections with *Salmonella*. Seven of the eight confirmed cases had the same strain of *Salmonella*, based on genetic fingerprinting (whole genome sequencing, or WGS) at the Washington State Public Health Laboratory. The eighth confirmed case did not have WGS testing done.

About *Salmonella*

Salmonellosis is a bacterial infection that is often spread through the fecal-oral route, through contaminated food and water, or through contact with animals and their environments. Symptoms of salmonellosis include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fever, chills, and abdominal cramping. Illness typically lasts several days, and people can spread infection to others even after symptoms resolve.

Ill persons with a suspected *Salmonella* infection should not work in food handling, patient care, or childcare while having vomiting or diarrhea.

Prevention

- Wash hands with soap and water after going to the bathroom, changing diapers, touching animals, and before eating or preparing food.
- Cook all meats thoroughly, especially poultry.
- Wash cutting boards and counters used for meat or poultry preparation immediately after use to avoid cross contaminating other foods.