

Salmonella Outbreak Linked to Geckos

Key points

Investigation start date: Feb. 24, 2025

Investigation status: Open

Recall issued: No

CDC and public health officials in several states are investigating a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to pet geckos. Geckos can carry *Salmonella* germs that can spread to you and make you sick. Always take steps to stay healthy around your pet gecko.

Fast Facts

- **Cases:** 8
- **Hospitalizations:** 0
- **Deaths:** 0
- **States:** 8

[Updates](#)[Locations](#)[Timeline](#)

Geckos and *Salmonella*

Geckos and other reptiles can carry *Salmonella* germs in their droppings even if they look healthy and clean. These germs can easily spread to their bodies and anything in the area where they live and roam.

You can get sick from touching your gecko or anything in its environment and then touching your mouth or food and swallowing *Salmonella* germs.

What you should do

Always take these steps to stay healthy around your pet gecko:

Wash your hands with soap and water

- After handling your gecko
- After feeding your gecko or handling its food
- After handling your gecko's poop or equipment (for example, cages, rocks, substrate, enrichment, cage decorations)

- After cleaning your gecko's cage
- Before eating and drinking

Play safely

- Children younger than 5 years old should not handle or touch reptiles, amphibians, or their environments because they are at a higher risk for serious illness and hospitalization caused by *Salmonella* infection.

Don't cross-contaminate

- Keep geckos and their equipment out of the kitchen or anywhere that food is prepared, stored, served, or eaten. Don't allow geckos to roam freely throughout a home or living area. Supervise your gecko when outside of its habitat to prevent accidents and contamination.
- Keep gecko food away from your food.

Safely clean your gecko's habitat

- [Clean your gecko supplies](#) outside of the house, if possible. These supplies may include feeders, toys, and food and water containers.
- If you must clean the supplies indoors, don't clean them in the kitchen or other areas where you eat or prepare food. Use a laundry sink or bathtub, and thoroughly clean and disinfect the area right after.
- Pour any water from your gecko's enclosure down the toilet instead of sinks or drains.

If you are thinking of getting a pet gecko:

Pick the right pet for your family

- Geckos and other reptiles are [not recommended](#) for children younger than 5, adults 65 and older, and people with weakened immune systems. These people are more likely to get a serious illness from germs that reptiles can carry.

What businesses should do

Educate customers about how to stay healthy around geckos.

- Consider giving a [pet safety handout](#) to customers who are buying a gecko.
- This [graphic](#) can be used as a social media post or a sticker and illustrates handwashing when handling pet reptiles, including geckos.

Learn more about how to protect your customers and employees from *Salmonella* infection and other diseases shared between animals and humans.

- Read this [resource](#) that provides tips on how to prevent diseases with non-traditional pets.

Symptoms of *Salmonella*

Most people infected with *Salmonella* experience diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps:

- Symptoms usually start 6 hours to 6 days after swallowing the bacteria.
- Most people recover without treatment after 4 to 7 days.

Some people—especially children younger than 5, adults 65 and older, and people with weakened immune systems—may experience more severe illnesses that require medical treatment or hospitalization.

Investigation details

CDC and public health officials in several states are collecting different types of data to investigate a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Muenchen infections.

Epidemiologic data shows that contact with pet geckos is making people sick in this outbreak.

Epidemiologic data

As of March 10, a total of 8 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Muenchen have been reported from 8 states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from December 16, 2024, to February 1, 2025.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely much higher than the number reported, and this outbreak may not be limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because many people recover without medical care and are not tested for *Salmonella*. 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 animals they came into contact with during the week before they got sick. This information provides clues to help investigators identify the source of the outbreak.

The table below has information about sick people in this outbreak ("n" is the number of people with information available for each demographic).

Demographics

Information

Age

(n=8)

Range from <1 to 80 years

Median age of 33 years

13% under 5 years

Sex

(n=8)

62% female

38% male

Race

(n=6)

100% White

Ethnicity

(n=7)

71% non-Hispanic

29% Hispanic

State and local public health officials are interviewing people about the animals they came into contact with during the week before they got sick. Of the 6 people interviewed, 5 (83%) reported contact with a gecko before getting sick. Some patients had contact with multiple types of geckos. Of 5 patients providing information about the types of geckos they had contact with, 3 reported contact with leopard geckos, 3 reported contact with crested geckos, 1 reported contact with a Malaysian cat gecko, and 1 reported contact with an African fat-tailed gecko.

Laboratory and traceback data

Public health investigators are using the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that may be part of this outbreak. CDC PulseNet manages a national database of DNA fingerprints of

bacteria that cause gastrointestinal illnesses. DNA fingerprinting is performed on bacteria using a method called [whole genome sequencing \(WGS\)](#).

WGS showed that bacteria from sick people's samples are closely related genetically. This means that people in this outbreak likely got sick from the same type of animal.

In 2015, this strain of *Salmonella* Muenchen caused [an outbreak in the United States](#) linked to contact with geckos. The Public Health Agency of Canada investigated an outbreak in [2024](#) of the same strain, also linked to geckos. Investigators are working to determine factors that might explain the recurrence and persistence of this strain among geckos.

People in this outbreak reported purchasing geckos at multiple retail locations. Investigators are collecting information to determine if a common source of geckos can be identified.

[WGS analysis](#) of 8 people's samples did not predict resistance to any antibiotics. More information is available at the [National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System \(NARMS\)](#) site.

Public health actions

CDC advises that you always take steps to [stay healthy around geckos](#):

- Wash your hands after handling geckos, their food, or items in their environment.
- Keep geckos out of the kitchen or anywhere that food is prepared, stored, served, or eaten and away from areas where young children play.
- Keep gecko supplies and habitats clean.
- Children younger than 5 years old should not handle or touch reptiles, amphibians, or their environments because they are at a higher risk for serious illness and hospitalization caused by *Salmonella* infection.