

Salmonella Outbreak Linked to Cucumbers



Investigation Notice

Posted June 5, 2024

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 162
- Hospitalizations: 54
- Deaths: 0
- [States](#): 25 states and the District of Columbia
- Investigation status: Active



Outbreak Investigation Summary

Epidemiologic data show that cucumbers may be contaminated with *Salmonella* and may be making people sick. Testing identified *Salmonella* in a cucumber collected as part of this investigation, which resulted in a recall. Further testing is underway to see if it is the same strain as the one making people sick. Investigators are also working to collect more information to see if other cucumbers are affected.

Recalled Food

Fresh Start Produce Sales Inc. [recalled](#) whole cucumbers.

- Cucumbers were sold in bulk to retail distribution centers, wholesalers, and food service distributors in 14 states, but these sellers may have shipped to additional states or re-packaged them for stores.
 - Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.
 - Shipped from May 17 to May 21.
 - Grown in Florida
- This recall does not include English cucumbers or mini cucumbers. Recalled cucumbers should no longer be in stores.

What You Should Do

- **Do not eat any recalled cucumbers.** If you recently purchased cucumbers and have them at home, you can check with the store where you purchased them to see if they were part of the recall. If you can't tell, do not eat them.
- **Wash items and surfaces** that may have touched the recalled cucumbers using hot soapy water or a dishwasher.
- **Call your healthcare provider** if you have any of these severe *Salmonella* symptoms:
 - Diarrhea and a fever higher than 102°F
 - Diarrhea for more than 3 days that is not improving
 - Bloody diarrhea
 - So much vomiting that you cannot keep liquids down
 - Signs of dehydration, such as:
 - Not peeing much
 - Dry mouth and throat
 - Feeling dizzy when standing up

What Businesses Should Do

- **Do not sell or serve recalled cucumbers.**
- **Wash and sanitize items and surfaces** that may have come in contact with recalled cucumbers.
- **Stores can also notify customers** who may have purchased recalled cucumbers using signs in stores or emails to customers.

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 years, adults 65 years and older, and people with weakened immune systems—may experience more severe illnesses that require medical treatment or hospitalization.

Investigation Details

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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are collecting [different types of data](#) to investigate a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* *Africa* infections.

Epidemiologic data show that cucumbers may be contaminated with *Salmonella* and may be making people sick.

CDC and FDA are also investigating an outbreak of *Salmonella* *Braenderup* infections, with 158 illnesses in 23 states. The two outbreaks share several similarities, including where and when illnesses occurred and the demographics of ill people. Investigators are working to determine whether the two outbreaks could be linked to the same food. Information will be provided on the source of the *Salmonella* *Braenderup* outbreak as it becomes available.

Epidemiologic Data

As of June 4, a total of 162 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* *Africa* have been reported from 25 states and the District of Columbia (see [map](#)). Illnesses started on dates ranging from March 11, 2024,

to May 16, 2024. Of 127 people with information available, 54 have been hospitalized and 0 deaths have been reported.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely much higher than the number reported, and the 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 foods they ate in 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).

Table of demographic information (n is the number of people with information available)

Demographics	Information
Age (n=161)	Range from <1 to 92 years Median age of 40
Sex (n=159)	64% female 36% male
Race (n=120)	83% White 13% African American/Black 1% Native American or Alaska Native 3% Asian 0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 0% reported more than one race
Ethnicity (n=115)	89% non-Hispanic 11% Hispanic

State and local public health officials are interviewing people about the foods they ate in the week before they got sick. Of the 65 people interviewed, 47 (72%) reported eating cucumbers. This percentage was significantly higher than the 50% of respondents who reported eating cucumbers in the [FoodNet Population Survey](#)—a survey that helps estimate how often people eat various

foods linked to diarrheal illness. This difference suggests that people in this outbreak got sick from eating cucumbers.

Laboratory Data

Public health investigators used the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that may have been part of this outbreak. CDC PulseNet manages a national database of DNA fingerprints of bacteria that cause foodborne 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 food.

WGS analysis of bacteria from 162 people's samples predicted resistance to fosfomycin. Among these, bacteria from 5 people's samples also predicted resistance to one or more of the following antibiotics: amoxicillin-clavulanic acid, ampicillin, azithromycin, cefoxitin, ceftiofur, ceftriaxone, ciprofloxacin, and tetracycline. More information is available at the [National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System \(NARMS\)](#) site. Most people with *Salmonella* illness recover without antibiotics. However, if antibiotics are needed, some illnesses in this outbreak may be difficult to treat with some commonly recommended antibiotics and may require a different antibiotic choice.

As part of this investigation, officials in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture collected samples of cucumbers from several retail locations in the state. Testing identified *Salmonella* in one sample of these cucumbers. Further testing is underway to determine if the strain of *Salmonella* from the cucumber sample is the same strain that is making people sick.

Public Health Actions

CDC advises people not to eat, sell, or serve recalled cucumbers while the investigation is ongoing.

Cucumbers distributed by Fresh Start Produce Sales, Inc. are from a variety of growers. The grower that likely supplied potentially contaminated cucumbers is no longer growing and harvesting cucumbers for the season.