

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Meats Sliced at Delis



Food Safety Alert

Posted August 8, 2024

Listeria is especially harmful to people who are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or with weakened immune systems. CDC always recommends people at higher risk for listeriosis avoid eating meats sliced at the deli or heat them to an internal temperature of 165°F or until steaming hot before eating.

Fast Facts

- Illnesses: 43 (9 new)
- Hospitalizations: 43 (10 new)
- Deaths: 3 (1 new)
- [States](#): 13 (0 new)
- Recall: Yes
- Investigation status: Active (First posted on July 19, 2024)

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Recalled Food

Boar's Head Ready-to-Eat Liverwurst Products

- Produced between June 11, 2024 and July 17, 2024, and have a 44-day shelf-life
- "Boar's Head Strassburger Brand Liverwurst made in Virginia"
- 3.5 pound loaves in plastic casing, or various weight packages sliced in retail delis
- Sell by dates range from July 25, 2024, to August 30, 2024

Other Boar's Head Deli Meat Products

Boar's Head also recalled all deli products, including prepackaged deli products, in shelf life from this establishment. Look for "EST. 12612" or "P-12612" inside the USDA mark of inspection on the product labels.

See the [recall](#) notice for more details about all recalled products.

Source of the Outbreak

Epidemiologic, laboratory, and traceback data show that meats sliced at delis, including Boar's Head brand liverwurst, are contaminated with *Listeria* and are making people sick.

Products sold at the deli, especially those sliced or prepared at the deli, can be contaminated with *Listeria*. *Listeria* spreads easily among deli equipment, surfaces, hands, and food. Refrigeration does not kill *Listeria*, but reheating to a high enough temperature before eating will kill any germs that may be on these meats.

What People at Higher Risk Should Do

Listeria is especially harmful if you are pregnant, are 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, are aged 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system:

- **Do not eat recalled deli meats.** Throw them away or contact stores about returns.
- **In addition, do not eat any other deli meats you get sliced at deli counters, unless it is reheated to an internal temperature of 165°F or until steaming hot.** Let it cool before you eat it.
 - *Listeria* can grow on foods kept in the refrigerator, but it is easily killed by heating food to a high enough temperature.
- **[Clean](#) your refrigerator, containers, and surfaces that may have touched sliced deli meats.**
 - This is especially important if you purchased any of the recalled deli products.

- **Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms:**
 - **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 Should Do

For people who are generally healthy and not at higher risk of serious infection:

- **Do not eat recalled meats.** Throw them away or contact stores about returns.
- **Check your refrigerator for any recalled deli meats and throw them away or return them to the store.** *Listeria* can grow on foods kept in the refrigerator.
- **[Clean](#) your refrigerator, containers and surfaces that may have touched recalled meats.**

What Businesses Should Do

- For delis that received recalled meats:
 - Thoroughly clean and sanitize all food and non-food surfaces.
 - Throw away any open meats and cheeses in the deli.
 - USDA-FSIS is advising delis to not use any opened deli products because recalled products can cross-contaminate other deli meats and cheeses.
- Always follow USDA-FSIS [best practices](#) for controlling *Listeria* contamination in deli areas.

Listeria Symptoms

- *Listeria* is especially harmful to people who are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or 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 who 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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CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) are collecting [different types of data](#) to investigate a multistate outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* infections.

Epidemiologic, laboratory, and traceback data show that meats sliced at deli counters, including Boar's Head brand liverwurst, are contaminated with *Listeria* and are making people sick.

Epidemiologic Data

Since the last update on July 31, nine more illnesses have been reported. As of August 8, a total of 43 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Listeria* have been reported from 13 states (see [map](#)). Sick people's samples were collected from May 29, 2024, to July 19, 2024 (see [timeline](#)). Of 43 people with information available, all 43 have been hospitalized. One person got sick during their pregnancy and remained pregnant after recovering. Three deaths have been reported, including one in Illinois, one in New Jersey, and, as of this update, one in Virginia.

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.

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=43)	Range from 32 to 94 years Median age of 77
Sex (n=43)	44% female 56% male
Race (n=39)	74% White 18% African American/Black 5% Asian 3% Other
Ethnicity (n=36)	97% non-Hispanic 3% Hispanic

State and local public health officials are interviewing people about the foods they ate in the month before they got sick. People are reporting eating a variety of meats sliced at deli counters. Of the 34 people able to be interviewed, 32 (94%) reported eating deli meats. Thirty of the 32 (94%) report meats sliced at a deli – two could not remember if their meats were sliced at the deli. Of the 33 people who answered if they ate liverwurst, 18 (55%) reported deli-sliced liverwurst before getting sick, and 13 reported Boar’s Head brand. These deli meats were sliced at a variety of supermarket and grocery store delis.

Laboratory and Traceback Data

The Maryland Department of Health and Baltimore City Health Department collected an unopened Boar’s Head liverwurst product from a retail store and identified *Listeria monocytogenes*. Additionally, the New York State Food Laboratory identified *Listeria monocytogenes* from a previously collected sample of unopened Boar’s Head liverwurst products collected by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets’ Division of Food Safety and Inspection from retail stores. WGS determined both to be the same strain as the strain making people sick in this outbreak.

USDA-FSIS conducted traceback of deli meats purchased by sick people in this outbreak to identify producers of interest for further investigation.

Public Health Actions

CDC advises people to not eat recalled deli meat products. CDC also advises people who are pregnant, aged 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system to avoid eating deli meats or to heat them before consuming.