

# Six cases of salmonella confirmed on campus

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Published: October 4th, 2012

The Johns Hopkins News-Letter ([www.jhunewsletter.com](http://www.jhunewsletter.com))

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Last Saturday, Dean of Student Life Susan Boswell sent an email to Hopkins students informing them of a salmonella outbreak occurring on the Homewood campus.

Six undergraduate students have been diagnosed with salmonella poisoning.

The salmonella cases have spurred an epidemiologic investigation led by the Baltimore City Health Department and Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in cooperation with the Student Health and Wellness Center.

The investigation, which includes interrogation of those affected, is ongoing and the source of the salmonella is still unknown.

"Salmonella is a bacteria. If the bacteria are ingested and survive the acidic environment of the stomach and can compete successfully with the millions of bacteria that normally live in the intestinal tract, then the salmonella stick to and can actually invade the lining of the large intestine. This process causes inflammation, resulting in abdominal pain and diarrhea," Alain Joffe, Medical Director at the Student Health and Wellness Center, wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*.

Kompan Ngasmsnga, Acting Director of the Office of Acute Communicable Diseases in the Baltimore City Health Department, is one of the major players in conducting this investigation to find the source of the salmonella bacteria. "At this point, most of the cases are either freshmen or sophomores, and their commonality is that they ate in the Fresh Food Café," Ngasmsnga said.

However, this does not mean that students should be wary each time they eat at the Fresh Food Café. "Our students' health and food safety has always been, and will continue to be, the most important component of our program," David Furhman, Director of Dining Programs, wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*.

Boswell reaffirmed this in her email when she stated that no new cases had been reported in eight days. Even Joffe sees no problem with eating campus food. "I have no reason to think that eating university food is unsafe," Joffe wrote. "Personally, I would not hesitate to eat at the FFC, Nolan's or Levering."

The salmonella cases will not affect the Fresh Food Café's relationship with caterer Aramark in the year before their contract expires

"There is no reason for this issue to affect our relationship with Aramark, now or moving forward," Furhman wrote. "Aramark's broad-based and extensive safety and sanitation policies and procedures are designed to safeguard against all food borne issues and illnesses. Those rigorous policies and procedures cover each and every aspect of the food service process, from procurement of food from reputable suppliers, through and including cooking and holding food at proper temperatures."

Many students, however, have a different take on the issue. As a Hopkins freshman, Henry Bernstein goes to the FFC multiple times a day. "I have no idea how safe the food is," Bernstein said, "It's very concerning that people are getting salmonella. There is no place else I can get food."

Freshman Carly Greenspan agrees. "My issue is that the FFC is where most people go, so a lot of people who have meal plans don't really have a choice. And if you don't know what's in the food you are eating — that's scary," Greenspan explained.

"I am a little nervous to eat at the FFC, since the people who had been getting sick had been eating there," freshman Evan Mitchell said. "I know there have been six reported cases, but I know of many students who have eaten at the FFC and had the symptoms of salmonella but just never reported it to the Student Health and Wellness Center."

Students who are facing the symptoms of salmonella poisoning, which include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fever, headache and cramps, are advised to go to the Student Health and Wellness Center immediately. In the case that the Student Health and Wellness Center is closed, students with serious symptoms are instructed to go to the Union Memorial Hospital Emergency Room. If the symptoms are mild and the Student Health and Wellness Center is closed, students are encouraged to call the nurse advice line provided by Sirona Health at (410)-516-8270.

However, diarrhea does not necessarily imply salmonella. "Diarrhea illness, which can have many different causes, is not uncommon among students," Boswell stated in her email. Even so, students who are experiencing two or more loose stools a day should go to have it checked.

Salmonella poisoning is contagious, as it spreads through direct contact. For that reason, all students both sick and healthy are strongly advised to wash their hands frequently and keep good hygiene especially before and after handling food, using the bathroom and touching pets.