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Public Health Notice: Outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to eggs

February 18, 2021 – Original Notice

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Why you should take note

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is collaborating with provincial public health partners, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Health Canada to investigate an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections involving Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. The outbreak appears to be ongoing, as recent illnesses continue to be reported to PHAC.

Based on the investigation findings to date, exposure to eggs has been identified as a likely source of the outbreak. Many of the individuals who became sick reported consuming, preparing, cooking and baking at home with eggs. Some individuals reported exposure to eggs at an institution (including nursing homes and hospitals) where they resided or worked before becoming ill.

Eggs can sometimes be contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria on the shell and inside the egg. The bacteria are most often transmitted to people when they improperly handle, eat or cook contaminated foods.

Illnesses can be prevented if proper safe food handling and cooking practices are followed. PHAC is not advising consumers to avoid eating properly cooked eggs,



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but this outbreak serves as a reminder that Canadians should **always handle raw eggs carefully and cook eggs and egg-based foods to an internal temperature of at least 74°C (165°F) to ensure they are safe to eat.**

PHAC is issuing this public health notice to inform Canadians of the investigation findings to date and to share important safe food handling practices to help prevent further *Salmonella* infections.

As the outbreak investigation is ongoing, it is possible that additional sources could be identified, and food recall warnings related to this outbreak may be issued. This public health notice will be updated as the investigation evolves.

Investigation summary

As of February 18, 2021, there have been 57 laboratory-confirmed cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis illness investigated in the following provinces: Newfoundland and Labrador (25), and Nova Scotia (32). Individuals became sick between late October 2020 and late January 2021. Nineteen individuals have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Individuals who became ill are between 2 and 98 years of age. The majority of cases (68%) are female.

Between October and December 2020, CFIA issued food recall warnings for a variety of eggs distributed in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The recalled eggs are now past their shelf-life and are no longer available for purchase. Some individuals who became sick in this outbreak reported exposure to recalled eggs; however, there are a number of recent ill individuals that do not.

The CFIA is continuing its food safety investigation, which may lead to the recall of other products. If other high-risk products are recalled, the CFIA will notify the public through updated [food recall warnings](#).

It is possible that more recent illnesses may be reported in the outbreak because there is a period of time between when a person becomes ill and when the illness is reported to public health officials. For this outbreak, the illness reporting period is between three and six weeks.

Who is most at risk

Anyone can become sick with a *Salmonella* infection, but [young children](#), [the elderly](#), [pregnant women](#) or [people with weakened immune systems](#) are at higher risk for contracting serious illness.

Most people who become ill from a *Salmonella* infection will recover fully after a few days. It is possible for some people to be infected with the bacteria and to



not get sick or show any symptoms, but to still be able to spread the infection to others.

What you should do to protect your health

Raw or undercooked eggs and egg-based foods carrying *Salmonella* may look, smell and taste normal, so it's important to always follow safe food-handling tips if you are buying, cleaning, chilling, cooking and storing any type of eggs or egg-based foods. If contaminated, the *Salmonella* may be found on the shell itself or may be inside the egg. The following food preparation tips may help reduce your risk of getting sick, but they may not fully eliminate the risk of illness.

- Always handle raw eggs carefully and cook eggs and egg-based foods to an [internal temperature of at least 74°C \(165°F\)](#) to ensure they are safe to eat.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked eggs. Cook eggs until both the yolk and white are firm.
- When purchasing eggs, choose only refrigerated eggs with clean, uncracked shells.
- Always wash your hands before and after you touch raw eggs. Wash with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.
- Eggs (whether raw or cooked) should not be kept at room temperature for more than two hours. Eggs that have been at room temperature for more than two hours should be thrown out.
- Use pasteurized egg products instead of raw eggs when preparing foods that aren't heated (such as icing, eggnog or Caesar salad dressing).
- Do not taste raw dough, batter or any other product containing raw eggs. Eating even a small amount could make you sick.
- Microwave cooking of raw eggs is not recommended because of the possibility of uneven heating.
- Sanitize countertops, cutting boards and utensils before and after preparing eggs or egg-based foods. Use a kitchen sanitizer (following the directions on the container) or a bleach solution (5 mL household bleach to 750 mL of water), and rinse with water.
- Do not re-use plates, cutting boards or utensils that have come in contact with raw eggs unless they have been thoroughly washed, rinsed and sanitized.
- Use paper towels to wipe kitchen surfaces, or change dishcloths daily to avoid the risk of cross-contamination and the spread of bacteria. Avoid using sponges as they are harder to keep bacteria-free.
- Do not prepare food for other people if you think you are sick with a *Salmonella* infection or suffering from any other contagious illness causing diarrhea.



Symptoms

Symptoms of a [*Salmonella* infection](#), called salmonellosis, typically start 6 to 72 hours after exposure to *Salmonella* bacteria from an infected animal or contaminated product.

Symptoms include:

- fever
- chills
- diarrhea
- abdominal cramps
- headache
- nausea
- vomiting

These symptoms usually last for 4 to 7 days. In healthy people, salmonellosis often clears up without treatment, but sometimes antibiotics may be required. In some cases, severe illness may occur and hospitalization may be required. People who are infected with *Salmonella* bacteria can be infectious from several days to several weeks. People who experience symptoms, or who have underlying medical conditions, should contact their health care provider if they suspect they have a *Salmonella* infection.

What the Government of Canada is doing

The Government of Canada is committed to protecting the health of Canadians from enteric disease outbreaks.

The Public Health Agency of Canada leads the human health investigation into an outbreak and is in regular contact with its federal, provincial and territorial partners to monitor the situation and to collaborate on steps to address an outbreak.

Health Canada provides food-related health risk assessments to determine whether the presence of a certain substance or microorganism poses a health risk to consumers.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency conducts food safety investigations into the possible food source of an outbreak.

Epidemiological information



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Figure 1 is an epidemiological curve for this outbreak, which shows the numbers of new cases by week. Outbreak investigators use this information to show when illnesses begin when they peak and when they trail off. It can take several weeks from the time a person becomes ill to when the illness is reported and testing confirms a link to the outbreak. Data are available for 57 cases.

Figure 1: Number of people infected with *Salmonella* Enteritidis

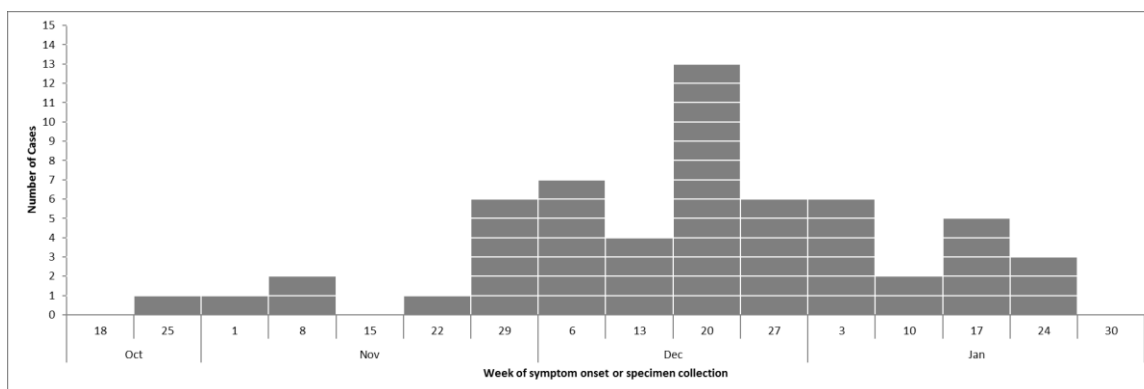


Table 1 – Number of people confirmed to be infected with *Salmonella* Enteritidis by week of illness onset or specimen collection

Week of symptom onset or specimen collection	Number of cases
2020-10-18	0
2020-10-25	1
2020-11-01	1
2020-11-08	2
2020-11-15	0
2020-11-22	1



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Week of symptom onset or specimen collection	Number of cases
2020-11-29	6
2020-12-06	7
2020-12-13	4
2020-12-20	13
2020-12-27	6
2021-01-03	6
2021-01-10	2
2021-01-17	5
2021-01-24	3
2021-01-30	0

Additional information

- [Salmonella](#)
- [Egg Safety](#)
- [Safe food handling practices](#)
- [COVID-19 and food safety](#)
- [Recalls and safety alerts mobile application](#)
- [CFIA's Food Recall Warning – December 12, 2020](#)
- [CFIA's Food Recall Warning – October 8, 2020](#)
 - [Updated Warning October 9, 2020](#)



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- [Updated Warning October 10, 2020](#)

Media Contact

Public Health Agency of Canada
Media Relations
(613) 957-2983
hc.media.sc@canada.ca

Public Inquiries

Call toll-free: 1-866-225-0709
Email: hc.media.sc@canada.ca