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Public Health Notice: Outbreak of *Salmonella* infections under investigation

November 12, 2021 – Original Notice

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Why should you 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 five provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The illness reported in Ontario was related to travel to Alberta.

The source of the outbreak has not been identified and the investigation is ongoing. Outbreak investigators are gathering information on possible sources and possible ways contamination may have occurred. Many of the individuals who became sick reported eating fresh produce before their illness. However, more



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information is needed to determine the source of the outbreak. The outbreak appears to be ongoing, as illnesses continue to be reported.

Given the evolving nature of this outbreak, PHAC is issuing this public health notice to inform residents in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba of the investigation findings to date and to share important safe food handling practices to help prevent further *Salmonella* infections. At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that residents in other provinces and territories are affected by this outbreak.

This public health notice will be updated as the investigation evolves.

Investigation summary

As of November 10, there have been 46 laboratory-confirmed cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis illness investigated in: British Columbia (18), Alberta (18), Saskatchewan (3), Manitoba (6) and Ontario (1). The illness reported in Ontario was related to travel to Alberta. Individuals became sick between late September 2021 and mid-October 2021. Three individuals have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Individuals who became ill are between 9 and 89 years of age. The majority of cases (64%) were female.

CFIA is conducting a food safety investigation. If contaminated food products are identified, they will take the necessary steps to protect the public, including recalling the product as required. Currently there are no Food Recall Warnings associated with this outbreak.

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.



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What should you do to protect your health

It is difficult to know whether a product is contaminated with *Salmonella* because you can't see, smell or taste it. The following tips may help reduce your risk of getting sick, but they may not fully eliminate the risk of illness.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling fresh produce.
- Cut away any bruised or damaged areas on fresh produce, since harmful bacteria can thrive in these areas. Be sure to clean your knife with hot water and soap before using it again.
- Wash fresh produce thoroughly under fresh, cool, running water, even if you plan to peel them. This helps prevent the spread of any bacteria that may be present.
- Don't soak fresh produce in a sink full of water. It can become contaminated by bacteria in the sink.
- Use a clean produce brush to scrub items that have firm surfaces like avocados, oranges, melons, potatoes, carrots. It is not necessary to use produce cleansers to wash fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Use one cutting board for produce, and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood.
- Place peeled or cut fruits and vegetables on a separate clean plate or in a container to prevent them from becoming cross-contaminated.
- Use paper towels to wipe kitchen surfaces, or change dishcloths daily to avoid the risk of cross-contamination and the spread of bacteria, and avoid using sponges as they are harder to keep bacteria-free.
- Sanitize countertops, cutting boards and utensils before and after preparing food. 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.



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- 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 four to seven 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 is the Government of Canada doing

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

PHAC 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.



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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.

CFIA conducts food safety investigations into the possible food source of an outbreak.

Additional information

- [Salmonella](#)
- [Safe food handling practices](#)
- [COVID-19 and food safety](#)
- [Recalls and safety alerts mobile application](#)
- [Produce Safety](#)

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