



## Salmonella Outbreak Linked to Cantaloupes

Date: December 1, 2023

**Public Health Message Type:**  Alert  Advisory  Update  Information

**Intended Audience:**  All public health partners  Healthcare providers  Infection preventionists  
 Local health departments  Schools/Childcare centers  ACOs  
 Animal health professionals  Other:

### Key Points:

- The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is working closely with CDC, FDA, and public health officials in several states on this *Salmonella* multistate outbreak investigation.
- Epidemiologic and laboratory data show that cantaloupes contaminated with *Salmonella* are the likely source of the outbreak.
- Most people infected with *Salmonella* experience diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps; symptoms usually start as early as 6 hours, and up to 6 days after swallowing the bacteria.
- Most people recover after 4 to 7 days without treatment; however, children younger than 5 years, adults 65 years and older, and people with weakened immune systems may experience more severe illness and require treatment or hospitalization.
- Consumers, restaurants, retailers, and wholesalers should not eat, sell, or serve whole or pre-cut recalled cantaloupe.
- Long-term care facilities, childcare centers, hospitals, and other facilities that care for people at higher risk should not serve cantaloupes from recalled brands (Malichita, Rudy) or pre-cut cantaloupe from unknown brands.

### Action Items:

- Clinicians should order stool culture for patients when the clinical presentation or history suggests a possible *Salmonella* infection.
- Laboratories are required to submit all *Salmonella* isolates to the state lab within 3 days for further confirmation and characterization to aid in public health surveillance.
- All cases, clusters and outbreaks should be reported to the Local Health Department where the patient resides; contact information is available at: [localhealth.nj.gov](http://localhealth.nj.gov)
- Cases should be interviewed promptly using the [Salmonella Case Report Form](#) and information gathered should be entered into the DSQ (Sources of Infection and Risk Factors) section within CDRSS.

### Contact Information:

- Deepam Thomas, Foodborne, Waterborne & Influenza Illness Coordinator, [Deepam.Thomas@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Deepam.Thomas@doh.nj.gov)
- Foodborne & Waterborne Illness Unit, Communicable Disease Service, [nj.fb@doh.nj.gov](mailto:nj.fb@doh.nj.gov), (609) 826-5964

### References:

- [Salmonella Home Page](#) (NJDOH)
- [CDC: Salmonella Outbreak Linked to Cantaloupes](#) (CDC)
- [FDA: Outbreak Investigation of Salmonella: Cantaloupes](#)

## Background:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that *Salmonella* causes about 1.35 million illnesses, 26,500 hospitalizations, and 420 deaths in the United States every year. Food is the source for most of these illnesses. Most people with *Salmonella* infection have diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps. Symptoms usually begin six hours to six days after infection and last four to seven days. Most people recover within four to seven days without antibiotics. People who are sick with a *Salmonella* infection should drink extra fluids for as long as diarrhea lasts. People can get infected from a variety of sources, including eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water and touching infected animals, their feces, or their environment.

Some people do not develop symptoms for several weeks after infection and others experience symptoms for several weeks. *Salmonella* strains sometimes cause infection in urine, blood, bones, joints, or the nervous system (spinal fluid and brain) and can cause severe disease. The following groups are more likely to get a *Salmonella* infection and severe illness:

- Children younger than 5 years.
- Infants (children younger than 12 months) who are not breast fed.
- Infants, adults aged 65 and older, and people with weakened immune systems.
- People taking certain medicines (for example, stomach acid reducers) are at increased risk.

## Investigation details:

NJDOH is working with the CDC, FDA, and public health officials in several states on a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to cantaloupes. As of November 28, 117 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* have been reported from 34 states; including 3 people from New Jersey. Illnesses started on dates ranging from October 17, 2023, to November 14, 2023. Of 103 people with information available, 61 have been hospitalized. Two deaths have been reported from Minnesota. Of the 52 people interviewed, 40 (77%) reported eating cantaloupe. Epidemiologic, laboratory, and traceback data indicate that cantaloupes from Malichita and Rudy brands are a potential source of this outbreak. Canada is also [investigating illnesses linked to Malichita brand cantaloupes](#). FDA has compiled a [list of recalls](#) that will be updated with new recalls. The investigation is ongoing to determine whether any additional products are linked to illnesses. Based on information available so far:

## Consumers should:

- Not eat or serve recalled whole or pre-cut cantaloupes from Malichita or Rudy brands or pre-cut cantaloupe from unknown brands.
- Wash items or surfaces that may have touched the cantaloupe using hot soapy water or a dishwasher.
- Contact your healthcare provider for severe *Salmonella* symptoms such as diarrhea and a fever higher than 102°F, diarrhea for more than three days and not improving, bloody diarrhea, or signs of dehydration (not peeing much, dry mouth and throat, feeling dizzy).

## Long-Term Care Facilities, Childcare Centers, Hospitals and Businesses should:

- Not sell or serve recalled brands of whole or pre-cut cantaloupes or any pre-cut cantaloupe if brands are unknown.
- Wash and sanitize items and surfaces that may have come in contact with recalled cantaloupes.