

Salmonella outbreak associated with some types of salad leaf products

Product recall: Information for consumers

This information is current as of 8 March 2016

An outbreak of salmonellosis has been linked to the consumption of a range of salad products supplied by Tripod Farmers located in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria.

About the product recall

Which products have been recalled?

The products were distributed to consumers through a number of distributors, including major supermarkets under various brands.

On 4 February 2016 Tripod Farmers undertook a recall of these products.

Recalled products have been removed from the shelves by distributors (supermarkets and food stores). Local government inspectors carried out checks to ensure affected products had been removed from shelves.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is the national food recall coordinator. All food recalls can be found on the FSANZ website at:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/recalls/Pages/default.aspx>

Further information including a full product list, is also available on Tripod Farmers' website at:

<http://www.tripodfarmers.com.au/>

Other salad products on the market are not implicated in the recall, and people should continue to eat lettuce and other leafy greens as part of a healthy diet.

Are these products still available nationally?

A large number of products were affected by this recall. Some of these were available in a number of states and territories, including Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, the ACT and Northern Territory. All affected products have now been withdrawn from sale.

Full details of this recall are available on the FSANZ website at:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/recalls/Pages/default.aspx>

Does the recall apply to other salad products?

No. At this time the recall applies only to the products listed.

About the investigation

How was the link between the salad products and *Salmonella* discovered?

Salmonella is a common form of gastroenteritis which can affect anyone. There are around 3500 cases notified to the department every year, but on average in recent years only around 10 of these have been the particular strain of *Salmonella* involved in this outbreak (*Salmonella* Anatum).

In this case, regular product testing conducted by Tripod Farmers found *Salmonella* in their products. At the same time, the Health Protection Branch of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services was investigating notified cases of *Salmonella* Anatum which involves interviewing cases and obtaining detailed food histories then comparing them to each other to determine any common foods consumed.

Subsequent laboratory investigations found the strain of the *Salmonella* in the Tripod Farmers' product was *Salmonella* Anatum and, combined with information from case interviews, the link was identified.

What else is happening?

The department's intensive investigations are continuing to try and determine the source of this outbreak – this includes at the packaging plant and on-farm. The investigation incorporates genetic testing that compares the DNA sequences of the *Salmonella* bacteria isolated from human (poo) samples to the *Salmonella* bacteria found in the product samples. This testing is very specific providing a link between affected product and affected people..

The department is working with Tripod Farmers, state and territory food regulators and epidemiologists, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, local councils and impacted food businesses as part of this investigation.

I'm worried about my family's health, what should I do?

If you are concerned about your own health or your family's health, see your doctor or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

About salmonellosis

What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a type of gastroenteritis caused by the germ (bacterium) *Salmonella*. Salmonellosis can affect anyone. The severity of symptoms depends on the number of bacteria you ingest, your age and your general health. You may be more prone to salmonellosis if you are elderly, have another medical condition (that weakens your immune system) or are malnourished.

Additional information is available on the Better Health Channel at:

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis-salmonellosis>

What are the symptoms of Salmonellosis?

You can fall ill any time between six to 72 hours after ingesting the bacteria. Symptoms include:

- diarrhoea, which may contain blood or mucous
- fever
- headache
- stomach cramps
- nausea
- vomiting
- dehydration, especially among infants and the elderly.

In rare cases, bacteria can enter the bloodstream and blood poisoning (septicaemia) may occur as a complication of salmonellosis.

How contagious is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is not easily spread from person to person, but people with symptoms of diarrhoea still need to practice good personal hygiene to prevent infecting close contacts, including those living in the same household and sharing bathrooms.

If I'm not showing symptoms can I still pass it on?

Yes it is possible, but not likely. Good personal hygiene practices, especially after visiting the toilet, should prevent close contacts of anyone infected with *Salmonella* bacteria from being at risk.

How can a person get salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis occurs when *Salmonella* bacteria are taken in by mouth. This may happen by:

- Eating food contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria such as undercooked meat, especially poultry, and raw or undercooked eggs.
- Eating cooked or ready-to-eat food that has been contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria from raw food, such as raw chicken. This is called cross-contamination and can also happen when food comes into contact with contaminated kitchen surfaces, such as chopping boards and utensils that have been used to prepare raw food.
- Contact with pets and farm animals infected with *Salmonella* bacteria.
 - Many animals, even reptiles, are commonly infected with *Salmonella* without having any symptoms of diarrhoea and will have the bacteria in their faeces. People can get salmonellosis if they do not wash their hands after handling pets and other animals.
- Close contact with a person who is infected with *Salmonella* bacteria and has diarrhoea.
 - If people with salmonellosis do not wash their hands properly after going to the toilet, their contaminated hands can spread the bacteria to surfaces and objects that may be touched by others, or food that will be eaten by others. Hands can also become contaminated when changing the nappy of an infected infant.

How can salmonellosis be prevented?

- Thoroughly cook all food derived from animal sources, particularly poultry, pork and egg products.
- Ensure cooked foods are not re-contaminated with bacteria from raw foods.
- Do not consume the recalled product.
- Generally, washing vegetables, including leafy salad products, reduces the risk of *Salmonella* contamination.
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling animals or cleaning up after your pet.
- Other advice can be obtained from the Better Health Channel website.

How long does the illness and infection last?

Illness from *Salmonella* infection usually only lasts for a few days, however the bacteria may be present in an infected person's faeces for several weeks, and very rarely for a longer period.

How is it diagnosed?

A stool sample is required for testing. If the results show that a person had salmonellosis, the treating doctor will be able to provide advice and will notify the Department of Health and Human Services.

How is it treated?

Illness from *Salmonella* infection usually only lasts for a few days and antibiotic treatment is not normally required. However, a doctor may prescribe antibiotics in some situations.

While a person is recovering:

- Give plenty of fluids. Oral rehydration solution is highly recommended for children with mild to moderate dehydration. It is available at pharmacies and should be administered following the instructions on the packaging.
- Mildly unwell children should be given their usual fluids more often. Carbonated (fizzy) drinks or undiluted juice should be avoided.
- Do not give medicines to prevent vomiting or diarrhoea (especially in children), unless specifically advised to do so by a doctor.
- Breastfed babies should continue to be breastfed throughout their illness.
- Children on formula or solid diets should restart their normal diet (including full strength lactose-containing milk) following rehydration with oral rehydration solution.
- Children who are hungry or ask for food should be given small portions of their usual foods, but avoid foods high in sugar or fat.

If you are being tested for salmonellosis

How long will it take to get the results?

Once you have had a stool sample taken and sent to a lab, your doctor will usually get results within a few days.

Should I do anything differently while I wait for results? For example, should I go to work?

Practice good personal hygiene. If you still have symptoms including diarrhoea, fever, nausea and abdominal discomfort, do not go to work. Do not send children with symptoms to school or child care. If possible, avoid preparing food for others, especially if you have diarrhoea.

People employed as food handlers, childcare workers and health care workers should not return to work until 48 hours after their symptoms resolve.

If you have been diagnosed with salmonellosis

What should I do if I have been diagnosed with salmonellosis?

Follow your doctor's advice.

People employed as food handlers, childcare workers and health care workers should not return to work until 48 hours after their symptoms resolve.

About food safety

Who is responsible for deciding to recall a food?

In Victoria, the Department of Health and Human Services can mandate a food recall, however most food recalls are voluntarily undertaken by the affected manufacturer or distributor.

More information

Further information regarding this issue may be published on the Chief Health Officer web pages of the Department of Health and Human Services website if required.

For health concerns, see your doctor or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

See Better Health Channel fact sheets for more information on:

- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis-salmonellosis>
- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/handwashing-why-its-important>

Food Safety website (Department of Health and Human Services) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety>

For an updated list of the recalled products: Food Standards Australia New Zealand
<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/Pages/default.aspx>

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