



CDC, U.S. FDA, and public health officials in many states are investigating a multi-state outbreak of human *Salmonella* serotype Saintpaul infections. Consumption of raw large tomatoes, including round red and Roma, are the likely source of these illnesses.



Red Plum/Red Roma tomatoes implicated in outbreak



Round red tomato implicated in outbreak

Between April 16 and May 27, 2008, 167 persons infected with the Saintpaul serotype have been identified in 17 states: Arizona (12 persons), California (2), Colorado (1), Connecticut (1), Idaho (2), Illinois (27), Indiana (7), Kansas (5), Michigan (2), New Mexico (39), Oklahoma (3), Oregon (3), Texas (56), Utah (1), Virginia (2), Washington (1), and Wisconsin (3). Patients range in age from 1 to 82 years; 49% are female. No deaths have been reported. Twenty three persons have been hospitalized

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has confirmed two cases of *Salmonella* Saintpaul. According to the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, a four year old child who was traveling in Texas became ill shortly after eating tomatoes there. State and local officials are also investigating whether a resident of Contra Costa County who had traveled out of state consumed tomatoes in California or in another part of the country.

What is Salmonella?

Salmonellosis is an infection with bacteria called *Salmonella*. Symptoms of salmonellosis include fever, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting, which generally occur 12-72 hours after exposure and last about one week. Although most people recover without treatment, those who are very young, elderly, or have weakened immune systems may have more severe illness or suffer complications, such as dehydration or bloodstream infection.

Consumer Recommendations:

The FDA recommends U.S. consumers limit tomato consumption to those not associated with this outbreak, including cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes, tomatoes sold with the vine still attached, and tomatoes grown at home or within areas not associated with this outbreak. The current list of these areas is available at <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html>.

Consumers should be aware that raw tomatoes are often used in the preparation of fresh salsa, guacamole, and pico de gallo, are part of fillings for tortillas, and are used in many other dishes. Also, consumers everywhere are advised to:

- Refrigerate within 2 hours or discard cut, peeled, or cooked tomatoes.
- Avoid purchasing bruised or damaged tomatoes and discard any that appear spoiled.
- Thoroughly wash all tomatoes under running water.
- Keep tomatoes that will be consumed raw separate from raw meats, raw seafood, and raw produce items.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot water and soap when switching between types of food products.

What should you do if you think you have been exposed?

If you have reason to believe you have been exposed to salmonellosis, talk to your medical provider.

Military providers are reminded that *Salmonella* is a reportable medical event (MER) to the Naval Disease Reporting System internet (NDRSi). Forwarding positive salmonella isolates to the state lab or a public health reference lab for further subtyping could also prove useful while the current outbreak is being investigated.

CDPH recommends Californians use caution in selecting tomatoes based on guidance from the Food and Drug Administration. FDA has no indication that tomatoes grown in California are associated with this outbreak. **In 2008, no cases of *Salmonella* Saintpaul have been found in Department of Defense laboratory data.**