

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When: Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Contact: Stephen Todd, Health Officer Phone:517-279-9561 x 148

From: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Michigan Now Added to the List of States Being Affected by Nationwide Salmonella Outbreak of Tomatoes

What is happening now?

The U.S Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is collaborating with public health officials in many states, including Michigan, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to investigate an ongoing multi-state outbreak of human *Salmonella* infections. An investigation has identified consumption of raw tomatoes as the likely source of the illnesses. The type and source of the tomatoes is under investigation; however, the data suggest that large tomatoes, including Roma and round red, are the likely source.



Background

Since mid-April, 167 persons infected with *Salmonella* 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). Illnesses began between April 16 and May 27, 2008. Patients range in age from 1 to 82 years. At least 23 persons were hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

The distribution of illnesses in all U.S. regions suggests that the tomatoes are likely distributed throughout much of the country, including Michigan. Because of the natural delay in testing and reporting and because many persons with *Salmonella* illness do not have a stool specimen tested, it is likely many more illnesses have occurred than those reported. Some of these unreported illnesses may be in states that are not listed above.

You may have salmonella if...

Most persons infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12–72 hours after infection. Infection is usually diagnosed by a stool sample. The illness usually lasts 4 – 7 days. Although most people recover without treatment, severe infections may occur. Infants, elderly persons, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely than others to develop severe illness. In severe cases, antibiotic treatment may be necessary.

What should you do?

At this time, FDA is advising U.S. consumers to limit their tomato consumption to those **that are not** the likely source of this outbreak. These include cherry tomatoes; grape tomatoes; tomatoes sold with the vine still attached; tomatoes grown at home. Consumers should be aware that raw tomatoes are often used in the preparation of fresh salsa, guacamole and many other dishes.

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.

Other Important information for Retailers

The FDA recommends that U.S. retail outlets, restaurants, and food service operators offer only fresh and fresh cut red Roma, red plum, and round red tomatoes and food products made from these tomatoes from specific sources listed at:

The following link is for information specific to food retailers.

www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html#retailers*. Cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes, and tomatoes sold with the vine still attached from any source may be offered.

Information from the FDA on this investigation can be found at:

www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html*

Information from the CDC on this investigation can be found at:

www.cdc.gov/salmonella/saintpaul

This press release and other important health information can be found on the web at:

www.bhsj.org