

Department of Public Health discovers rare Salmonella strain that leads to FDA's multistate recall of frozen coconut

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- Department of Public Health

BOSTON — Disease investigators at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) have traced a rare strain of Salmonella to frozen shredded coconut, prompting the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the distributor this month to issue a multistate recall.

[The FDA said testing performed by Massachusetts](#) led Evershing International Trading Company to announce a recall of Coconut Tree Brand Frozen Shredded Coconut (Item number 331223, UPC 05216-44081) packaged in 16-ounce plastic bags. The product is distributed in Ohio, Massachusetts, Washington, California, Oklahoma, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Florida, and Texas.

Staff from DPH's Food Protection Program in the Bureau of Environmental Health, the State Public Health Laboratory and the Epidemiology Program housed in the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences, and the Boston Public Health Commission discovered the unusual Salmonella strain while investigating a single case of Salmonella.

"This case demonstrates how public health in Massachusetts works in a coordinated way to protect the food supply and enable consumers to eat at restaurants with confidence," said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. "The fact that we have detected this strain of Salmonella that caught the attention of the US government is a testament to the work of our dedicated staff, whom I applaud."

As part of the investigation, staff from DPH and Boston Inspectional Services collected samples of various food products used as ingredients from a Boston restaurant and interviewed people who fell ill.

Those food samples were brought back to the State Public Health Laboratory for testing, which confirmed that one of the samples, an unopened package of raw frozen coconut meat, was positive for Salmonella. DPH shared the lab results with the FDA and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which ultimately led to the decision by the distributor to announce the recall of all lots of frozen shredded coconut sold between Jan. 3, 2017 and Jan. 3, 2018.

Salmonella are germs (bacteria) that cause an infectious disease (called "salmonellosis") of the bowel in humans and animals. Although the disease is usually limited to the bowel, and most infected people do not have any serious medical complications, the salmonella germ

can spread to other systems of the body, such as the blood and bone. This may cause serious complications in infants and in people who are very old or are immunocompromised.

The most common symptoms are stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever, nausea, and sometimes vomiting. Symptoms most often begin 12 to 72 hours after the germs are swallowed. Symptoms generally last for several days. Some people with salmonellosis become sick enough to require hospitalization.

Questions about the recall can be directed to DPH's 24-hour Epidemiology Program hotline at (617) 983-6800.

SOURCE: <https://www.mass.gov/news/department-of-public-health-discovers-rare-salmonella-strain-that-leads-to-fdas-multistate>