

Multistate Outbreak of *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Coconut Tree Brand Frozen Shredded Coconut

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Highlights

- [Read the Recall & Advice to Consumers, Restaurants, and Retailers>>](#)
- CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are investigating a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* infections.
- Twenty-five people infected with the outbreak strains of *Salmonella* I 4,[5],12:b:- or *Salmonella* Newport have been reported from nine states.
 - Six ill people have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.
- [Epidemiologic, laboratory, and traceback evidence](#) indicates that Coconut Tree Brand Frozen Shredded Coconut, distributed by Evershing International Trading Company, is the likely source of this multistate outbreak.
 - On January 3, 2018, Evershing International Trading Company [recalled](#) all 16 oz. Coconut Tree Brand Frozen Shredded Coconut after *Salmonella* was identified in the product by [officials in Massachusetts](#).
- CDC recommends that retailers not sell, restaurants not serve, and consumers not eat recalled frozen shredded coconut.
 - The recalled product was packaged in 16-ounce plastic bags labeled as Coconut Tree Brand Shredded Coconut.
 - If you have recalled frozen shredded coconut in your home, you can return it to the place of purchase for a refund.
 - If you aren't sure if the frozen coconut you bought is Coconut Tree Brand frozen Shredded Coconut, you can ask the place of purchase. Restaurants and retailers can ask their supplier.
 - When in doubt, don't eat, sell, or serve it. Throw it out.
 - Wash and sanitize countertops as well as drawers or shelves in freezers or [refrigerators](#) where frozen shredded coconut was stored.
- This investigation is ongoing. CDC will provide updates when more information is available.

Initial Announcement

January 16, 2018

CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are investigating a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* infections.

Public health investigators are using the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that may be part of this outbreak. PulseNet is the national subtyping network of public health and food regulatory agency laboratories coordinated by CDC. DNA fingerprinting is performed on *Salmonella* bacteria isolated from ill people by using techniques called [pulsed-field gel electrophoresis](#) (PFGE) and [whole genome sequencing](#) (WGS). CDC PulseNet manages a national database of these DNA fingerprints to identify possible outbreaks. WGS gives a more detailed DNA fingerprint than PFGE.

As of January 12, 2018, 25 people infected with the outbreak strains of *Salmonella* I 4,[5],12:b:- (24 people) or *Salmonella* Newport (1 person) have been reported from 9 states. A list of the states and the number of cases in each can be found on the [Case Count Map](#) page. One more ill person infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* I 4,[5],12:b:- has been reported from Canada.

WGS showed that isolates from people infected with *Salmonella* I 4,[5],12:b:- are closely related genetically. This close genetic relationship means that people in this outbreak are more likely to share a common source of infection.

Illnesses started on dates ranging from May 11, 2017 to November 4, 2017. Ill people range in age from 1 year to 82, with a median age of 19. Among ill people, 19 (76%) are male. Six people (24%) report being hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

This outbreak can be illustrated with a chart showing the number of people who became ill each day. This chart is called an epidemic curve, or [epi curve](#).

Investigation of the Outbreak

[Epidemiologic, laboratory, and traceback evidence](#) indicates that Coconut Tree Brand frozen Shredded Coconut is the likely source of this multistate outbreak. This investigation is ongoing.

In interviews, ill people answered questions about the foods they ate and other exposures in the week before they became ill. Ten (63%) of 16 people interviewed reported eating or maybe eating coconut. Of these 10 people, 8 (80%) reported having an Asian-style dessert drink that contained frozen shredded coconut.

Throughout the outbreak investigation, state and local health officials have collected different food items from restaurants where ill people consumed Asian-style dessert drinks. In November 2017, laboratory

testing of a sample from coconut milk made in one restaurant in New York did not identify the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* I 4,[5],12:b:-, but did identify a strain of *Salmonella* Newport. This sample was from coconut milk made with Coconut Tree Brand frozen Shredded Coconut, as well as other ingredients. WGS showed that the *Salmonella* Newport isolated from the coconut milk was closely related genetically to a *Salmonella* Newport isolate from an ill person from Massachusetts who had consumed an Asian-style dessert drink.

In December 2017, [officials in Massachusetts](#) collected food items from a restaurant where that ill person had consumed Asian-style dessert drinks. One sample from frozen shredded coconut identified a strain of *Salmonella* that was new to the PulseNet database and has not been linked to any illnesses. This sample was from an unopened package of Coconut Tree Brand Frozen Shredded Coconut. As a result, on January 3, 2018, Evershing International Trading Company [recalled](#) all Coconut Tree Brand Frozen Shredded Coconut. The recalled product was packaged in 16-ounce plastic bags.

Officials in Massachusetts returned to the restaurant and collected more Coconut Tree Brand frozen Shredded Coconut in January 2018. On January 12, laboratory testing confirmed that samples from that frozen shredded coconut identified the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* I 4,[5],12:b:-. Laboratory testing of other samples identified several types of *Salmonella* bacteria, including *Salmonella* Javiana, *Salmonella* Rissen, and *Salmonella* Thompson. These samples were from unopened packages of Coconut Tree Brand Frozen Shredded Coconut sold before January 3, 2018. CDC is reviewing the PulseNet database to determine if the other *Salmonella* isolates from the frozen shredded coconut are linked to any illnesses.

The frozen shredded coconut linked to this outbreak was used as an ingredient in Asian-style dessert drinks served at restaurants. The product was also sold in grocery stores and markets in [several states](#). Frozen shredded coconut can last for several months if kept frozen and may still be in retail stores or in people's homes. CDC recommends that retailers not sell, restaurants not serve, and consumers not eat recalled Coconut Tree Brand frozen Shredded Coconut.

This investigation is ongoing and we will provide updates when they are available.

SOURCE: <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/coconut-01-18/index.html>