

# Salmonella Outbreak Tied to Sprouts From Dixon San Francisco

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San Francisco

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A batch of salad sprouts contaminated by Salmonella bacteria has sickened at least 18 Northern California residents and prompted a recall by the Yolo County distributor of the garden fresh products.

The California Department of Health Services issued a warning yesterday afternoon that packages of Salad Cosmo and Sprout Medley brand clover sprouts made by Salad Cosmos of Dixon had been linked to a Bay Area outbreak.

A total of 13 cases of salmonellosis, a food-borne illness marked by fever and diarrhea, have been traced to the sprouts in Santa Clara County. Three cases have been identified in Santa Cruz, and one each in San Benito and San Francisco. All of the reported case occurred between May 10 and May 30.

Although 18 cases of salmonellosis have been confirmed, sources said state health experts are investigating at least eight other suspected cases, all in Santa Clara County.

Three-quarters of the victims reported thus far have been women. Epidemiologists have traced eight of 10 cases to a single delicatessen chain with multiple outlets that had purchased Salad Cosmo sprouts.

On Thursday the state health department initiated the recall of all remaining Salad Cosmo clover sprout products. "We are still trying to determine how much of the product was distributed. Most of it was sold to restaurants," said California Department of Health Services spokesman Ken August.

A company representative said the sprouts are grown and packaged in Dixon and that the recall has not halted the sale of newly packed produce.

He said the cause of the contamination remains under investigation.

All of the victims suffered from severe diarrhea. One Santa Cruz woman has been hospitalized, but there have been no fatalities, according to August. State health officials acknowledge that the number of people sickened by the bacteria may be much higher — the figures are based on cases reported by physicians. Many more illnesses may have gone undiagnosed or unreported.

The suspect bacteria has been identified as the “St. Paul” strain of Salmonella, a common foodborne pathogen. Both clover and alfalfa sprouts have been linked to previous outbreaks of salmonella and the more dangerous E. coli O157:H7, a potentially deadly microbe that was found in hamburger and unpasteurized fruit juices.

Public health officials are concerned about the potential for food poisoning in sprout products because they are eaten raw and are produced under conditions that can encourage bacterial growth.

Salmonellosis is a potentially serious form of food poisoning that can lead to hospitalization or even death. Ten months ago, the state health department issued a warning that “high risk” individuals — the very young, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems

–avoid consumption of raw clover and alfalfa sprouts.

August said that clover and alfalfa sprouts should not be served in day care centers, school lunch programs, nursing homes or hospitals.

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SaladCosmo Recalls Clover Sprouts – 18 Cases of Salmonellosis Linked to ContaminatedProduct

SafetyAlerts  
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Dixon, CA – The California Department of Health Services(DHS) has warned consumers not to eat Salad Cosmo brand clover sprouts because the product may be contaminated with salmonella, a dangerous bacteria. The clover sprouts have been linked to at least 18 cases of salmonellosis, a food-borne illness, including 13 in Santa Clara, three in Santa Cruz, one in San Benito and one in San Francisco counties. The clover sprouts are also contained in a “Sprout Medley” produced by Salad Cosmo. The illnesses occurred between May 10 and May 30. The manufacturer, Salad Cosmo of Dixon, California, has voluntarily recalled the clover sprouts distributed to restaurants and grocery stores in northern California.

Consumers who purchased the recalled sprout products should discard or return them to the place of purchase for a refund.

Clover and alfalfa sprouts have repeatedly been linked to outbreaks of Salmonella and E. coli 0157 infections. Salmonellosis is an acute bacterial infection commonly characterized by diarrhea and fever. Symptoms usually develop within one to four days after eating contaminated food. Most cases resolve without the need for medical attention.

People who have eaten sprouts and develop severe symptoms should contact their doctor. Some individuals with salmonellosis develop serious illness that can lead to hospitalization and even death.

Clover and alfalfa sprouts are of concern for several reasons:

\* Sprouts generally are eaten raw with no additional treatment, such as cooking, which eliminates bacteria that can cause disease.

\* Conditions required for sprout growing are ideal for rapid bacterial growth.

\* Consumers may be unknowingly exposed to sprouts on sandwiches or salads purchased at restaurants and delicatessens.

Today's warning follows an advisory issued by DHS in August for "high-risk" individuals to avoid eating raw clover and alfalfa sprouts until methods are implemented to improve their safety. High-risk consumers include the very young, the elderly and individuals with compromised immune systems. DHS officials today reiterated their warning that clover and alfalfa sprouts should not be served in day care centers, school lunch programs, nursing homes, and hospitals.

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