

## **Pima County Tracking Cases Related to Multi-State Salmonella Outbreak**

The Pima County Health Department is closely following the ongoing investigation of at least 66 cases in six counties around the state as part of a larger multi-state investigation of 285 cases in 27 states. So far, 10 cases of salmonella infection related to this outbreak in Pima County have been identified. None of the cases in Pima County have resulted in life-threatening illness but three of these cases have required hospitalization. All three have since been released.

“While hearing about an outbreak this widespread can be unsettling, it’s important for folks to know that Salmonella bacteria infections, including Salmonella Poona, are one of the most common causes of food poisoning in the United States and in most cases will not cause severe illness,” said Dr. Francisco Garcia, Director of the Pima County Health Department. “The reason the Health Department and our federal and state partners are looking at this outbreak so urgently is that a majority of the cases both statewide and here in Pima County have affected children.”

Seven of the 10 Pima County cases and about 75% of the 66 cases in Arizona are children, although officials conducting the investigation have not identified the reason for this trend. Salmonella can typically cause more serious illness in children, the elderly and persons with weakened immune systems because of chronic illnesses.

The State Public Health Laboratory confirmed that all of the cases in Arizona were caused by the Salmonella Poona bacteria. The vast majority of the people affected became ill on or after July 13, 2015 and reported eating garden variety cucumbers from a restaurant or grocery store. Garden variety cucumbers are the thick-skinned unwrapped cucumbers. The affected cucumbers do not include the long thin wrapped cucumbers (English cucumbers) or the small pickle-shaped cucumbers (Persian cucumbers). The investigation is ongoing and officials are working hard to identify the specific origin of the food that caused these illnesses.

“When we talk about produce being contaminated, the bacteria lives on the outside of the product where it comes in contact with soil and not usually on the inside,” says David Ludwig, Manager for Pima County Health Department’s Consumer Health and Food

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Safety Program. “When we cook food products, cooking to the temperature of 165 degrees kills Salmonella but with produce we don’t cook, like cucumbers, we need to thoroughly scrub the outside to remove any soil contamination.”

Salmonella is a bacteria that can infect a person’s stomach and intestines if it is eaten. The most common sources of Salmonella infection are undercooked poultry, eggs, and meats. Pets, especially birds and reptiles can also transmit Salmonella. Symptoms usually last 4-7 days and most people get better without treatment. Symptoms of Salmonella infection include diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps, vomiting. People experiencing such symptoms should call their health care provider.

“No matter where these sorts of contaminations come from, there are simple things we can do to prevent Salmonella infections. By practicing safe food handling when preparing food for yourself or others,” says Garcia.

- **CLEAN** your hands and fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- **SEPARATE** meats, seafood, poultry and eggs from fresh/ready to eat foods while grocery shopping, storing in the refrigerator, and when you are preparing food.
- **COOK** foods to the correct temperature before eating and keep it at least 140 degrees while serving.
- **CHILL** foods promptly in the refrigerator and thaw or marinate foods in the refrigerator, never on the counter or in the kitchen sink.

People should visit [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) to get more information about safe food handling.

Every year, about 1,000 Salmonella cases are reported to public health departments in Arizona, of which 6% are cases of Salmonella Poona. For more information about Salmonella and this outbreak please visit [www.azdhs.gov](https://www.azdhs.gov)

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