



Ankin Law Office LLC

Protecting the Rights of Injured Workers

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Turkey Salmonella Outbreak

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The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** is working with public health officials across the country and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS) to determine the cause of a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Heidelberg infections that is likely caused by eating ground turkey. To date, 77 persons from 26 states, including 7 persons from Illinois, have been infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Heidelberg between March 1 and August 1, 2011. Because the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Heidelberg is resistant to many commonly prescribed antibiotics, the risk of hospitalization or treatment failure may be increased.

Who Has Been Infected?

The illnesses reported to date began on or after March 9, 2011 and those infected with the *Salmonella* Heidelberg strain range in age from less than one year to 88 years old, with a median age of 23 years. Nearly half (48%) are female and, of the 58 infected persons with available information, 22 (38%) have been hospitalized and one death has been reported.

Those that became ill in the past 2-3 weeks may not be reported yet due to the lag time between a person becoming ill and the time that the illness is reported.

How Is the Outbreak Being Investigated?

The CDC believes that the *Salmonella* Heidelberg outbreak strain has been caused by ground turkey because nearly 50% of the ill persons for whom there is available information have reported eating ground turkey, a percentage that is significantly higher than the results from a survey of healthy persons. In addition, cultures of four ground turkey samples purchased from four retail locations between March 7 and June 27, 2011 indicated the presence of the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Heidelberg. Preliminary information has shown that three of these samples originated from the same production facility, with the fourth sample still under investigation.

In order to determine the specific cause of the outbreak strain, the CDC and public health investigators are using DNA "fingerprints" of *Salmonella* bacteria to identify cases of illness that may be part of this outbreak. They are also examining data collected from a network of state and local public health laboratories and federal food regulatory

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laboratories that perform molecular surveillance of foodborne infections. Product information, such as the date and location of purchase, is also being collected from ill persons to help with the public health agencies' investigations.

What Are Some Symptoms of the Salmonella illnesses?

Most persons infected with [Salmonella bacteria](#) develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection, with recovery usually occurring within 4 to 7 days without treatment. In some cases, however, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient requires hospitalization or the infection may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and other parts of the body, which can result in death if the patient is not treated promptly with antibiotics. Those with weakened immune systems, such as the elderly and infants, are more likely to have a severe *Salmonella* infection.

How Can Consumers Protect Themselves from Salmonella and Other Foodborne Illnesses?

On July 29, 2011 [USDA-FSIS released a public health alert](#) reminding consumers that it is important to follow package cooking instructions for frozen or fresh ground turkey products, as well as general food safety guidelines for handling and preparing any raw meat or poultry. Consumers can help protect themselves from [foodborne illnesses](#) by following the following food safety procedures:

- Use a food thermometer to ensure that meat and poultry is cooked to a final internal temperature of 165 °F regardless of the cooking time indicated with cooking instructions since the actual time may vary depending on the cooking method used.
- Thoroughly wash hands, work surfaces and cooking utensils with soap and water immediately after they have come in contact with raw meat or poultry, and disinfect work surfaces with an antibacterial solution.
- If served undercooked poultry in a restaurant, send it back to the kitchen for further cooking.
- Avoid cross-contamination of foods by keeping uncooked meats away from produce, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands, work surfaces and utensils thoroughly after touching uncooked foods.
- Make sure to wash hands before handling food, and between handling different food items.
- Refrigerate raw and cooked meat and poultry within two hours after purchase, or one hour if temperatures exceed 90° F. Refrigerate cooked meat and poultry within two hours after cooking.
- Set refrigerators to maintain a temperature of 40 °F or below.
- Immediately consult a health care professional if you suspect you have become ill from eating possibly contaminated food.

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The Chicago product liability law firm of Ankin Law Offices, LLC is committed to protecting of consumers from dangerous and defective products, including unsafe food products. If you suspect that you are the victim of a foodborne illness, contact one of our Chicago product liability attorneys at (800) 442-6546 to learn more about how to protect yourself.

Howard Ankin of Ankin Law Office LLC (www.ankinlaw.com) handles workers' compensation and personal injury cases. Mr. Ankin can be reached at (312) 346-8780 and howard@ankinlaw.com.

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