

Food contamination info sheet #2

***Listeria* in peaches and similar fruits**

July 23, 2014

Many news media outlets have been reporting about the recall of peaches and other stone fruits from a California producer. This fruit went to a wide range of retailers operating in Kansas and Missouri, including ALDI, Trader Joes, Costco, Kroger, Walmart, and Sam's Clubs. Even the small grocery store in my home town of Volga, South Dakota sold some of the fruit, so it may have gone to a number of other small grocery stores as well. No listeriosis cases have yet (as of July 22, 2014) been associated with the recall, but *Listeria* can have an incubation period of up to 70 days, so cases could possibly start to be reported in the next few months.

Fruits included in the recall: conventional and organic yellow and white nectarines, yellow and white peaches, black plums and pluots from Wawona Packing Company in California, which were packed between June 1 and July 12, 2014

Brands included: Wawona, Harvest Sweet, Sweet 2 Eat

Photos of some of the containers the fruit was shipped in or packaged in are available from [FDA](#) and from [Wawona Packing company](#)

Lot and block numbers of the recalled fruit is available from [FDA](#)

If you are not sure if fruit you have purchased is part of the recall, you can call the retail outlet where the fruit was purchased and ask.

What should I do if I purchased some of the recalled fruit?

If possible, return it to the place of purchase for a refund. If not, throw it away.

What if I already consumed the recalled fruit?

It would be a good idea to clean your refrigerator and any containers or countertops or other surfaces that contacted the recalled fruit (this is a good practice anytime!). After wiping with hot soapy water, sanitize it with a solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach to 1 quart of water, then rinse with plain water and pat dry with clean paper towels or air dry. If you still have some fruit that has been stored with or touched the recalled fruit, it may be a good idea to throw away that fruit and wash your hands afterward.

If you or anyone that may have consumed or touched the fruit have any severe symptoms of Listeriosis in the next few months (see below), see your doctor and be sure to mention that you contacted some of the potentially contaminated fruit.

What if I canned some of the recalled fruit?

All properly canned fruit will be safe to consume as canning easily kills *Listeria*.

Who should be most concerned about *Listeria* infection?

Pregnant women, older adults, newborns, and adults with weakened immune systems. However, other healthy adults could also potentially become infected if the level of bacteria present is high enough.

How do I know if I have been infected with *Listeria* bacteria?

Symptoms typically include fever and muscle aches, sometimes with diarrhea or other gastro-intestinal symptoms. Other symptoms could include headache, stiff neck, confusion, and loss of balance.

Pregnant women could also experience added fatigue from *Listeria*. Infections can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or life-threatening infection of the newborn. More information is available from [CDC](#).

How long does it take between eating *Listeria*-contaminated food products and symptoms developing?

The incubation period of *Listeria* ranges from 3 to 70 days. This means that you could eat a contaminated product in July and not experience any symptoms until September. Once symptoms are experienced, they can last from several days to several weeks. Some people are infected with *Listeria* and never experience any symptoms.

What should I do if I or someone I know develops the symptoms of *Listeria* infection?

[CDC](#) states that, "If you become very sick with fever and muscle aches or stiff neck, or if you develop fever and chills while pregnant, consult your doctor immediately. A blood or spinal fluid test (to look for the bacteria) will show if you have listeriosis."

Why are we concerned about *Listeria*?

Listeria monocytogenes bacteria is commonly found in soil and water. It can be spread to any type of produce through animal feces or cross-contamination. It can also spread to produce in the packing facility. The problem is that if people consume produce (or other foods) containing high enough levels of certain strains of *Listeria*, they can make vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, the elderly, infants, and immune-compromised people (and potentially other healthy adults) very sick and even potentially die. Also, it can grow at refrigeration temperatures, particularly if your refrigerator gets too far above the recommended temperature of 40F.

What else can I do to prevent *Listeria* infection?

Preventing *Listeria* infection is very similar to preventing any foodborne disease: A) Wash produce properly and keep separated from raw meats and poultry. B) Keep all of your kitchen (including your refrigerator!) clean. C) Ensure your refrigerator is 40F or lower and the freezer at 0F or lower. D) Cook meats and poultry thoroughly. Some food safety tips particularly for pregnant women are available [here](#).

Sources and more information available from:

[CDC](#), [FDA](#), and [Food Safety News](#)

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