

Ohio Department of Health

246 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
www.odh.ohio.gov

Ted Strickland, Governor

Alvin D. Jackson, M.D., Director



N E W S

Office of Public Affairs

Robert Jennings, Director

For Immediate Release – Friday, Jan. 23, 2009

ODH WEBSITE FEATURES LATEST INFORMATION ON SALMONELLA OUTBREAK

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) continues to participate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in a multistate outbreak investigation of human infections due to *Salmonella* serotype Typhimurium that has been going on since October 2008.

As of 9 p.m. EDT, Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2009, the reported number of cases was 486 in 43 states. Ohio has now surpassed California as the leading state with 67 reported cases throughout 26 counties. These cases range in age from 2 months to 89 years; 34 of the cases are female and 33 are male. The number of hospitalizations reported in Ohio to date is 19, with the latest date of onset reported on Dec. 27, 2008. Among the 67 cases there have been four reported fatalities. However, in only one of these fatalities *Salmonella* has been listed on the death certificate as “other significant condition contributing to death, but not the immediate or underlying cause.”

In an effort to keep Ohioans informed and safe, the state health department is now featuring information on its website (<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/>) regarding the progress of the investigation, as well as listing all recalled products associated with the outbreak. Certain pet foods have also been added to the growing list of recalled products.

“As with the other involved states and federal agencies, we are participating in epidemiological and laboratory studies to better understand this outbreak,” said ODH director, Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. “Specifics regarding the investigation and recalled products to date are noted on our website and on the CDC and FDA sites as well. As the contaminated product(s) are defined and recalls are initiated it is hoped that the cases due to this outbreak will decline,” he said.

Earlier this month, public health investigations determined that the King Nut brand creamy peanut butter was a likely source of *Salmonella* infections. In response, Ohio-based King Nut Companies, a distributor of peanut butter manufactured by Peanut Corporation of America, announced a voluntary recall of its products. According to the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Agriculture, no food products containing peanut butter have tested positive in Ohio to date.

While peanut butter is being examined as a likely source for some of the cases in the current outbreak, ODH wants to remind consumers that more than 1300 cases of salmonellosis are reported in Ohio each year, with many more cases going unreported. Many foods can become contaminated with *Salmonella*. Therefore, safe food handling and preparation, and practicing good hygiene remain the most effective ways to prevent the infection.

Salmonellosis is an infection with bacteria called *Salmonella*. Most people infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts four to seven days, and most people recover without treatment.

What can you do to prevent salmonellosis?

- Cook poultry, ground beef, and eggs thoroughly. Do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs, or raw (unpasteurized) milk.
- If you are served under-cooked meat, poultry or eggs in a restaurant, don't hesitate to send it back to the kitchen for further cooking.
- Wash hands, kitchen work surfaces, and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry.
- Be particularly careful with foods prepared for infants, the elderly, and those with a compromised immune system.
- Wash hands with soap after handling reptiles, birds, including baby chicks, and after contact with pet feces.
- Avoid direct or even indirect contact between reptiles (turtles, iguanas, other lizards, snakes) and infants or those with a compromised immune system.
- Don't work with raw poultry or meat and an infant (e.g., feeding, changing a diaper) at the same time.
- Mother's milk is the safest food for young infants. Breastfeeding prevents salmonellosis and many other health problems.

More information about the current salmonella outbreak can be found on the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/> and the FDA website: <http://www.fda.gov/> Please visit the ODH website at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/> on a regular basis to keep up-to-date on Ohio's progress.

-30-

Contact: Ohio Department of Health, Office of Public Affairs, 614-644-8562.