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**TWELVE SALMONELLA CASES IN MASSACHUSETTS LINKED BY DNA TO
 NATIONAL OUTBREAK INVOLVING TOMATOES**

Infections identified as part of routine surveillance.

Consumers should continue to avoid certain types of tomatoes.

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced that twelve cases of salmonella in Massachusetts have been linked to the nationwide outbreak associated with certain types of raw tomatoes.

These cases were identified through routine surveillance involving DNA matching of the outbreak strain with samples submitted by healthcare providers throughout Massachusetts. The strain of salmonella identified is Salmonella Saintpaul, a specific sub-type of the bacteria. To date, more than 500 cases linked to certain tomatoes have been reported nationwide. Health officials in New York and New Hampshire have also identified cases in those states in recent days.

Breakdown of Cases:

The individuals listed below reported becoming sick between May 30 and June 8. At least two of the cases have required hospitalization.

County	Age	Sex
Middlesex	33 years	Female
Middlesex	39 years	Female
Middlesex	5 years	Female
Middlesex	29 years	Female
Worcester	38 years	Male
Plymouth	23 years	Female

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Norfolk	36 years	Male
Norfolk	26 years	Female
Norfolk	18 years	Female
Norfolk	23 years	Male
Suffolk	19 years	Male
Suffolk	20 years	Male

Not all tomatoes are affected by the outbreak – only certain tomatoes from certain states. Tomatoes grown in Massachusetts are considered safe to eat by the FDA.

The FDA has advised consumers to **avoid certain raw red plum, raw red Roma, raw red round tomatoes and products containing these tomatoes.** Tomatoes that are safe to eat include **cherry, grape, tomatoes sold with the vine still attached, and tomatoes grown at home.** These are not likely to be tainted with salmonella.

The FDA Advisory

Consumers, restaurants and other food establishments should continue to check the FDA website below for a list of states affected by the outbreak, along with a list of locations where tomatoes not affected by the outbreak are grown and harvested.

www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01848.html

FDA Information About How To Ensure Tomatoes Are Safe to Eat:

How can consumers tell where a tomato was grown, harvested, or packed?

Consumers can ask retailers (for example, store and restaurant personnel) where their raw red plum tomatoes, raw red Roma tomatoes, and raw red round tomatoes were produced. If consumers have any doubts about where these types of tomatoes were grown, harvested, or packed, they should discard them. Because grape tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, and tomatoes sold with the vine still attached are **not** implicated in this outbreak -- regardless of where they are from -- it's not necessary to ask where they were grown, harvested, or packed.

Will washing the tomatoes identified in this outbreak make them safe to eat?

Consumers are advised **not** to try to wash raw red plum, red Roma, or raw red round tomatoes that are implicated in the outbreak. Consumers should throw these tomatoes out. Once produce is contaminated with pathogens such as *Salmonella*, the contamination is difficult to remove.

Will peeling the tomatoes implicated in this outbreak make them safe to eat?

Consumers are advised **not** to try to peel raw red plum, red Roma, or raw red round tomatoes that have **not** been ruled out as the source of the outbreak. Consumers should throw these

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tomatoes out. Peeling a tomato that is contaminated on the outside would be likely to spread the contamination to the inside. Also, if the contamination is already on the inside, peeling will not remove it.

Can cooking tomatoes eliminate *Salmonella*?

Consumers should **not** attempt to cook the tomatoes involved in this outbreak in an effort to kill *Salmonella*. Handling tomatoes contaminated with *Salmonella* can spread the bacterium to anything the handler touches, including hands, kitchen utensils, cutting boards, sinks, and other foods. Cooking tomatoes in the home will **not** ensure that *Salmonella* is eliminated.

Are canned tomatoes and processed foods containing tomatoes safe for consumers during this outbreak?

Consumers may continue to buy and eat **canned or bottled (that is, processed)** red plum, red Roma, and red round tomatoes and canned or bottled foods containing these or any other types of tomatoes if they were processed by a commercial food-processing facility. A few examples are the canned tomatoes and canned or bottled tomato juice and spaghetti sauce found in grocery stores.

About Salmonella

Salmonella are germs (bacteria) that cause an infectious disease (called “salmonellosis”) of the bowel in humans and animals. The disease is usually limited to the bowel but the salmonella germ can spread to other parts of the body, such as the blood and bones. Most infected people do not have any serious medical complications, but infants, the very old, people who are immunocompromised and people with certain types of blood diseases (such as sickle cell disease) are more likely to experience serious illness.

Salmonella germs are common in uncooked food products from animals, such as eggs, egg products, meat, meat products, poultry, unpasteurized milk and other unpasteurized dairy products. However, salmonella can sometimes contaminate fruit and vegetables.

Approximately 2000 cases of salmonella in Massachusetts were reported to DPH last year. For more information on preventing salmonella, please visit www.mass.gov/dph