

Salmonella outbreak associated with IHOP in Bellevue

At-a-glance

Cases: 11

Hospitalizations: 2

Deaths: 0

Status: Investigation is complete

Location: 14747 NE 20th St, Bellevue, WA 98007

Illness Onset Date Range: October 23, 2023 – February 28, 2024

Meal Date Range: October 16, 2023 – February 26, 2024

Current Inspection Rating: EXCELLENT

Summary

Public Health investigated an outbreak of salmonellosis (caused by *Salmonella* bacteria) associated with IHOP in Bellevue. The people who became sick reported eating a wide variety of breakfast foods at IHOP. Public Health reopened the investigation on March 27, 2024, after another person tested positive with same strain of *Salmonella*. Additionally, we have received confirmation that IHOP in Bellevue received onions that was part of a national recall. We were able to positively detect the same strain of *Salmonella* at the facility that since closed and did a thorough cleaning before reopening.

Illnesses

11 people from 11 separate households reported becoming sick. The people who became sick ranged in age from 17 to 70 years old. All 11 people developed one or more symptoms consistent with salmonellosis, including nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, bloody stool, and fever. We did not identify any ill employees.

At the time of our initial posting, we disclosed three cases linked to this outbreak. Since we were able to detect *Salmonella* Thompson in the facility, and since the facility received onions linked to a larger outbreak, we are including cases that were not previously confirmed to be part of this outbreak.

Public Health actions

Public Health conducted interviews with the people who became sick to identify potential common exposures and identified that six became sick after eating at IHOP in Bellevue. No specific food was identified.

Environmental Health Investigators requested source information and food receipts from the restaurants on January 11, 2024. Investigators visited the restaurant on January 16, 2024. Investigators reviewed the restaurant's food preparation processes and did not identify factors that may have contributed to the outbreak. The facility conducted a thorough deep cleaning and reinforced food safety training with staff.

After receiving notice of the positive case in late March, Environmental Health Investigators visited the facility on April 02, 2024, to test for the *salmonella* strain. After detecting *Salmonella* Thompson in the facility, the food service facility closed on April 10, 2024, to complete a thorough cleaning and disinfection. Environmental Health Investigators revisited the facility on April 11, 2024, and verified proper compliance with cleaning and disinfection. The food facility reopened on Friday, April 12th.

Laboratory testing

All 11 cases had testing that identified *Salmonella* infections via culture. Further testing found all 11 cases had the same strain of *Salmonella* based on genetic fingerprinting (whole genome sequencing or WGS) at the Washington State Public Health Laboratory.

About *Salmonella*

Salmonellosis is an infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria that is often spread through the fecal-oral route, through contaminated food and water, or through contact with animals and their environments. Symptoms of salmonellosis include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fever, chills, and abdominal cramping. Illness typically lasts several days, and people can spread infection to others even after symptoms resolve.

Sick people with a suspected *Salmonella* infection should not work in food handling, patient care, or childcare while having vomiting or diarrhea.

To prevent *Salmonella* infection:

- Wash hands with soap and water after going to the bathroom, changing diapers, touching animals, and before eating or preparing food.
- Cook and reheat all meats thoroughly, especially poultry.
- Wash cutting boards and counters used for meat or poultry preparation immediately after use to avoid cross contaminating other foods.

More information

- [Salmonella facts](#), Public Health — Seattle & King County
- [Salmonella facts](#), foodsafety.gov