



## Outbreak of *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Pet Hedgehogs



# Investigation Notice

Posted January 25, 2019 at 1:30 PM ET

**CDC and public health officials in several states are investigating a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* infections linked to contact with pet hedgehogs.**

### Latest Outbreak Information



- Eleven people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium have been reported from eight states.
  - One person has been hospitalized and no deaths have been reported.
- Epidemiologic and laboratory evidence indicate that contact with pet hedgehogs is the likely source of this outbreak.
  - In interviews, 10 (91%) of 11 ill people reported contact with a hedgehog.
  - A common supplier of hedgehogs in this outbreak has not been identified.
- The outbreak strain making people sick was identified in samples collected from three hedgehogs in two ill patients' homes in Minnesota.

### At A Glance

- Reported Cases: 11
- States: 8
- Hospitalizations: 1
- Deaths: 0



### Advice to Pet Owners and Retailers



- **People who own or come in contact with hedgehogs should take steps to stay healthy around their pet.**
  - Hedgehogs can carry *Salmonella* germs in their droppings while appearing healthy and clean.
  - These germs can easily spread to their bodies, habitats, toys, bedding, and anything in the area where they live. People become sick after they touch hedgehogs or anything in

their habitats.

- **Wash your hands**
  - Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching, feeding, or caring for a hedgehog or cleaning its habitat. Adults should supervise handwashing for young children.
- **Play safely**
  - Don't kiss or snuggle hedgehogs, because this can spread *Salmonella* germs to your face and mouth and make you sick.
  - Don't let hedgehogs roam freely in areas where food is prepared or stored, such as kitchens.
- **Clean habitats, toys, and supplies outside the house when possible.** Avoid cleaning these items in the kitchen or any other location where food is prepared, served, or stored.
- **Pick the right pet for your family.** Children under 5 years old, adults over 65, or people with weakened immune systems are at a greater risk for serious illness. Households with these individuals might consider a different pet.
- Hedgehog breeders, pet stores, or others that sell or display hedgehogs should provide educational materials to employees and customers.

## Symptoms of *Salmonella* Infection

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- Most people infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps 12 to 72 hours after being exposed to the bacteria.
- The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without treatment.
- In some people, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized. *Salmonella* infection may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and then to other places in the body.
- In rare cases, *Salmonella* infection can cause death unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics.
- Children younger than 5 years, adults older than 65 years, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to have severe illness.
- For more information, see the CDC [Salmonella](#) website.

### Investigation Details

January 25, 2019

CDC and public health officials in several states are investigating a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium infections linked to contact with pet hedgehogs.

Public health investigators are using the [PulseNet](#) system to identify illnesses that may be part of this outbreak. PulseNet is the national subtyping network of public health laboratories coordinated by CDC. DNA fingerprinting is performed on *Salmonella* bacteria isolated from ill people by using techniques called [pulsed-field gel electrophoresis](#) (PFGE) and [whole genome sequencing](#) (WGS). CDC PulseNet manages a national database of these DNA fingerprints to identify possible outbreaks. WGS gives a more detailed DNA fingerprint than PFGE. WGS performed on *Salmonella* from ill people in this outbreak showed that they are closely related genetically. This means that the ill people are more likely to share a common source of infection.

As of January 23, 2019, 11 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium have been reported from eight states. A list of the states and the number of cases in each can be found on the [map of reported cases page](#).

Illnesses started on dates from [October 22, 2018](#) to [December 25, 2018](#). Ill people range in age from 2 to 28 years, with a median age of 12. Forty-five percent are female. Of 11 people, 1 (9%) has been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

In interviews, ill people answered questions about animal contact in the week before they became ill. Of 11 people interviewed, 10 (91%) reported contact with hedgehogs before becoming ill. Ill people reported buying hedgehogs from various sources, including pet stores, breeders, or online.

The outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium was identified in samples collected from three hedgehogs in two ill patients' homes in Minnesota. A common supplier of hedgehogs has not been identified. Regardless of where hedgehogs are purchased, these animals can carry *Salmonella* germs that can make people sick. Hedgehog owners should always follow [steps to stay healthy around their pet](#).

This investigation is ongoing, and CDC will provide updates when more information becomes available.

## Outbreak By the Numbers



MAP OF REPORTED CASES



TIMELINE OF REPORTED CASES

## Key Resources

- *Salmonella* from small mammals
- Stay healthy around small pets
- Healthy Pets Healthy People
- *Salmonella* outbreaks linked to animals

## File Formats Help:

How do I view different file formats (PDF, DOC, PPT, MPEG) on this site? (<https://www.cdc.gov/Other/plugins/>)

(<https://www.cdc.gov/Other/plugins/#pdf>)

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