

For immediate release:
June 4, 2008

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FDA, CDC Make Recommendations for Tomato Consumption in New Mexico Forty New Mexicans Sick in Ten Counties

(Santa Fe) -- The United States Food and Drug Administration is alerting consumers in New Mexico and Texas that a *Salmonella* outbreak appears to be linked to eating certain types of raw red tomatoes, including red plum, red Roma, and round red tomatoes. The New Mexico Department of Health is continuing its investigation with FDA and other state and federal agencies to determine the source and specific type of contaminated tomato.

At this time, the FDA recommends people in New Mexico and Texas should eat tomatoes that have not been implicated in the outbreak. These include cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes, tomatoes sold with the vine still attached, and tomatoes grown at home.

“It is important to emphasize that no locally grown tomatoes from New Mexico have been implicated in this outbreak,” said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil. “We have made great progress in this investigation, and we are continuing to work hard to get more specific information to the public as soon as we can.”

Until further information is available, the Department of Health and CDC recommend the following for people in New Mexico and Texas:

- Persons with increased risk of severe infection, including infants, elderly persons, and those with impaired immune systems, should not eat raw Roma, plum, or red round tomatoes other than those sold attached to the vine or grown at home.
- People who want to reduce their risk of *Salmonella* infection can avoid consuming raw Roma, plum, or red round tomatoes other than those sold attached to the vine or grown at home.
- Avoid purchasing bruised or damaged tomatoes and discard any that appear spoiled.
- Thoroughly wash all tomatoes under running water.
- Refrigerate within two hours or discard cut, peeled, or cooked tomatoes.
- Keep tomatoes that will be consumed raw separate from raw meats, raw seafood, and raw produce items.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot water and soap when switching between types of food products.

So far, 40 people from 10 counties in New Mexico have been sick with a strain of *Salmonella* called *Salmonella* Saintpaul. Several people have been hospitalized, and no one has died. The cases reside

in Bernalillo, Cibola, Curry, Dona Ana, McKinley, Otero, San Juan, Grant, Sandoval, and Socorro counties.

The Department's Scientific Laboratory has linked 30 of the Salmonella Saintpaul cases to the outbreak strain through a DNA fingerprinting technique. The lab is testing the remaining 10 Salmonella Saintpaul cases. The Laboratory is also testing a wide variety of tomatoes from stores across the state to determine whether the tomatoes contain the same strain of Salmonella that has sickened New Mexicans.

Many grocery stores in New Mexico have been stocking tomatoes that originate in Mexico. The Department of Health and federal agencies are still investigating the source of the outbreak.

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 persons recover without treatment. Some people may need hospitalization due to severe diarrhea. The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.

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