

## Health Officials Say Salmonella Outbreak Linked to 2 Brands of Tainted Peanut Butter

Friday, February 16, 2007



ATLANTA — Government scientists struggled Thursday to pinpoint the source of the first U.S. salmonella outbreak linked to peanut butter, the kid favorite packed into millions of lunchboxes daily.

Nearly 300 people in 39 states have fallen ill since August, and federal health investigators said they strongly suspect Peter Pan peanut butter and certain batches of Wal-Mart's Great Value house brand — both manufactured by ConAgra Foods Inc. Shoppers across the country were warned to throw out jars with a product code on the lid beginning with "2111," which denotes the plant where it was made. How the dangerous germ got into the peanut butter was a mystery. But because peanuts are usually heated to high, germ-killing temperatures during the manufacturing process, government and industry officials said the contamination may have been caused by dirty jars or equipment.

The suspect peanut butter was produced by ConAgra at its only peanut butter plant, in Sylvester, Ga., federal investigators said. ConAgra said it is not clear how many jars are affected by the recall. But the plant is the sole producer of the nationally distributed Peter Pan brand, and the recall covers all peanut butter — smooth and chunky alike — produced by the plant from May 2006 until now. FDA inspectors visited the now shut-down plant Wednesday and Thursday to try to pinpoint where the contamination could have happened. The FDA last inspected the plant in 2005. Testing was also being done on at least some the salmonella victims' peanut butter jars, but investigators said some may have already been discarded. The highest number of cases were reported in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Tennessee and Missouri. About 20 percent of all the ill were hospitalized, and there were no deaths, the CDC said.

About 85 percent of the infected people said they ate peanut butter, and about a quarter of them ate it at least once a day, the CDC's Lynch said. It was the only food that most of the patients had all recently eaten. Salmonella sickens about 40,000 people a year in the U.S. and kills about 600 in comparison to affecting 21 million around the world. It can cause diarrhea, fever, dehydration, abdominal pain and vomiting. But most cases of salmonella poisoning are caused by undercooked eggs and chicken. The only known salmonella outbreak in peanut butter — in Australia during the mid-1990s — was blamed on unsanitary plant conditions.

974 million pounds of peanut butter are sold each year in the U.S., and peanut butter and jelly is the most popular sandwich among children. Great Value peanut butter is also produced by some other manufacturers for Wal-Mart. The states reporting cases are Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and West Virginia.

While rodents and birds commonly get into peanut storage bins, germs are killed when raw peanuts are roasted. When making peanut butter, the nuts are again heated — above the salmonella-killing temperature of 165 degrees — as they are ground into a paste and mixed with other ingredients before being squirted into jars and quickly sealed. Salmonella commonly originates in the feces of birds and animals, and could be introduced at a multitude of stages in the peanut butter-making process. But many safeguards are in place.

1. What is the mean per state of people who have fallen ill since August? Which five states reported the highest number of salmonella illnesses?
2. In paragraph form, explain the significance and recommendations if in receipt of the digits twenty-one-eleven.
3. As of Friday, February 16, what is believed to be the cause of salmonella? Any changes as of Friday, February 23? Thursday, March 1?
4. How many people a year generally contract salmonella in the U.S.? What percentage of them typically die from the virus? Given that rate, approximately how many more would die around the world?
5. In paragraph form, thoroughly explain the signs and symptoms caused by salmonella?
6. How many ounces of peanut butter is each American responsible for consuming given the current U.S. population of 301,182,481 (census.gov)?
7. What local connection exists with the peanut butter recall? What region(s) of the nation were hit the hardest? When and where did the last salmonella outbreak in peanut butter occur?
8. In the passage above, in paragraph form, explain at least five ways using the "Four-Step Reading" poster simplifies understanding of the material. Be specific.
9. In complete sentences, using contextual clues only, explain the meaning of the italicized words: *salmonella*, *denotes*, and *discarded*. Additionally, use each in a sentence to demonstrate further comprehension.
10. In paragraph form, explain at least five legitimate and educational purposes behind The Daughtry Times.