

Raw tuna suspected as source of salmonella outbreak: CDC

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At least 53 people in nine states have fallen ill, while 10 have been hospitalized, agency reports.

(HealthDay)—Raw tuna is suspected as the source of a salmonella outbreak that has now sickened 53 people in nine states, according to U.S. health officials.

No deaths have been reported. But 10 people have been sick enough to be hospitalized, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday in a statement. The majority of those who fell ill said they had recently eaten sushi that included raw tuna.

However, "a common brand or supplier of raw tuna has not been identified," the CDC said in its statement.

While the bulk of cases, 31, are in California, eight other states are affected: Arizona (10), Illinois (1), Mississippi (1), New Mexico (6), South Dakota (1), Virginia (1), Washington (1) and Wisconsin (1), the agency said.

Most of the cases have involved people who live in the southwestern United States, or who traveled to that part of the country in the week before they became sick, the CDC said. The first case was reported on March 5, and state and [federal health](#)

[officials](#) have found five clusters where ill people ate sushi at the same establishments.

"This outbreak reinforces the ever-present risks associated with eating fish, meat or poultry that have not been properly cooked and prepared," said Dr. Robert Glatter, an emergency physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

"This outbreak begs the question as to whether the sushi was prepackaged from a distributor, based on the size and number of states involved, along with the potential issue of improper food handling and storage," Glatter added.

Another expert agreed that eating raw or undercooked food will always carry some risk of food poisoning.

"The outbreak reaffirms the importance of the consumer being cautious and informed when dining on raw or undercooked (i.e. "seared" beef, pork, seafood, fish etc.)," said Dr. Howard Selinger, chair of family medicine at the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Conn.

"There is always a small inherent risk of bacterial contamination," Selinger explained. "There is no way to mitigate this risk down to zero. Thoroughly rinsing the item is not sufficient."

Salmonella causes more than one million cases of [food poisoning](#) in the United States every year, according to the CDC. Symptoms include diarrhea, cramping and fever. In this latest outbreak, a variant known as salmonella paratyphi B has been identified as the source of illness.

"This is a good reminder to Californians that there are sometimes risks when eating raw or undercooked meats, fish or poultry," Dr. Karen Smith, director of the California Department of Public Health, said in a statement. "This is

particularly true for young children, the elderly, or people with compromised immune systems who may be at an increased risk of severe illness."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [salmonella](#).

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