



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Not So Fast Food

Multistate Outbreak of Salmonella Serotype I 4,5,12:i: Infections Associated with Pot Pies — United States, 2007

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

In our hurried society, speed often takes precedence over safety. A recent CDC report identified over 400 people who contracted Salmonella food poisoning from eating microwavable meals that were inadequately cooked. Some meals contain ingredients that haven't been previously cooked. For these dinners, called not-ready-to-eat meals, proper cooking is essential for safety.

Dr. Rajal Mody is an EIS Officer with CDC's National Center for Zoonotic, Vector-Borne, and Enteric Diseases. He's joining us today to discuss ways to avoid getting sick from Salmonella. Welcome to the show, Raj.

[Dr. Mody] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Raj, how did CDC identify this Salmonella outbreak?

[Dr. Mody] Well, Bob, the outbreak was actually identified by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. When people with diarrhea go to the doctor, often a stool culture will be ordered, and if the culture grows Salmonella, the Salmonella will be sent to the state public health laboratories for additional testing, including determination of the Salmonella's genetic fingerprint. The Pennsylvania Department of Health determined that all four infections in their state had the exact same genetic fingerprint, suggesting that this may be an outbreak.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, how far did this outbreak spread?

[Dr. Mody] Bob, it eventually spread to 41 states and it affected people of all age ranges. When we see outbreaks like this, affecting people all over the country, it suggests that the source of infections might be a widely-distributed food item.

[Dr. Gaynes] It seems that you were focusing on microwavable meals. Did the outbreak involve any particular brand or type?

[Dr. Mody] Bob, most people affected in the outbreak ate Banquet-brand pot pies during the week before they became sick. This type of meal is a not-ready-to-eat product, meaning that it requires full cooking before eating. People need to be careful because sometimes these not-ready-to-eat meals look like they're fully cooked, so appearances can be deceiving. There are also frozen meals that just need to be warmed up.

[Dr. Gaynes] Raj, what advice can you give to reduce the risk of getting sick from microwavable meals?

[Dr. Mody] Well, Bob, I think there are three things people can do. First, it's important to read the packaging of these products to determine whether or not they require full cooking or if they just need to be warmed up. Second, it's really important to follow the cooking instructions carefully. And third, it's important to know the wattage of your microwave because often cooking instructions vary, depending on the wattage of a microwave. Cooking times may be longer in lower wattage microwaves.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about Salmonella?

[Dr. Mody] Bob, they can go to www.cdc.gov/salmonella.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks Raj. I've been talking with Dr. Rajal Mody, an EIS officer with CDC, about ways to avoid getting sick from Salmonella.

Remember, not all microwavable meals are fully cooked, so follow those package instructions and stay safe.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.