

CDC: Food poisoning from salmonella up in US

June 7 2011, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- More Americans got food poisoning last year, with salmonella cases driving the increase, the government reported Tuesday.

Illness rates for the most common serious type of E. coli fell last year. There was a rise in cases caused by other strains of the bacteria, although that bump may just reflect more testing was done for them, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) said.

An unusually aggressive strain of E. coli is behind the current large outbreak of food poisoning in Europe, mostly in Germany. That strain has never caused an outbreak in the U.S.

The CDC estimates that 50 million Americans each year get sick from foodborne illnesses, including about 3,000 who die.

The report released Tuesday is based on foodborne infections in only 10 states, or about 15 percent of the [American population](#). But it has information that other databases lack and is believed to be a good indicator of food poisoning trends.

More than 19,000 cases of food poisoning were reported in those states last year. That was up from 17,500 cases in 2009, and about 18,500 in 2008.

Last year, there were 4,200 hospitalizations and 68 deaths in those states.

Year-to-year numbers can be misleading, especially from just a sample of states. Health officials note that the number of food poisoning cases have decreased by about a quarter since tracking began 15 years ago. Rates for most of the illnesses have also been relatively flat.

Not for [salmonella](#), however. The bug caused the most illnesses of the nine leading [food-poisoning](#) causes last year. Salmonella cases haven't diminished in 15 years, and rose in the last few years by 10 percent.

"We've made virtually no progress against salmonella," said CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden.

One of the largest U.S. outbreaks last year involved salmonella tainted eggs that may have sickened as many as 56,000, according to a CDC estimate. That probably contributed to the increase seen in Tuesday's report, said Dr. Christopher Braden, a [CDC](#) epidemiologist.

The Food and Drug Administration last summer put in place new rules that should significantly reduce illnesses caused by salmonella in eggs, the FDA's Michael R. Taylor said.

Officials hope to put the same kind of dent in salmonella that they did with E. coli O157. The bacteria became infamous in a 1993 [outbreak](#) linked to Jack in the Box hamburgers.

More regulation and testing of meat helped cut those E. coli cases in half - from a rate of 2 per 100,000 people to less than 1 per 100,000 last year.

In the bad news department, [health officials](#) continue to see jumps in illness caused by a group of bacteria called vibrio, which are associated with shellfish. There were fewer than 200 vibrio cases reported in 2010, but that's more than double the numbers seen in the 1990s.

Vibrio cases are preventable. Flash-freezing and pasteurization of oysters could reduce the risk to consumers, Braden said.

More information: CDC report:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/FoodSafety/index.html>

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Citation: CDC: Food poisoning from salmonella up in US (2011, June 7) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-06-cdc-food-poisoning-salmonella.html>

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