

U.S. officials pinpoint common sources of foodborne illnesses

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Almost 2 million Americans fall ill each year, report notes.

(HealthDay)—Beef, dairy, fruit and certain types of vegetables are among the most common sources for the four major types of foodborne illness that strike nearly 2 million Americans each year, a U.S. government report finds.

More than 80 percent of *E. coli* O157 illnesses are linked to beef and vegetable row crops, such as leafy vegetables, while 77 percent of [salmonella infections](#) are associated with seeded vegetables (such as tomatoes), eggs, fruit, chicken, beef, sprouts and pork, the report showed.

About three-quarters of [campylobacter](#) illnesses are linked with dairy (66 percent) and chicken (8 percent). Most of the outbreaks caused by

dairy were associated with raw milk or cheese produced from raw milk, such as unpasteurized queso fresco, officials said.

Fruit is implicated in 50 percent of [listeria infections](#), followed by dairy at 31 percent, according to the investigators at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

However, they noted there is a lack of data about listeria outbreaks, and the large role of fruit in listeria illness reflects the impact of a single outbreak linked to cantaloupes in 2011. There are also limitations in data about campylobacter outbreaks.

This means the report's findings about the sources of listeria and campylobacter outbreaks should be used with other data to make risk-based decisions, the researchers said.

Their report is based on an analysis of data from nearly 1,000 [foodborne illness outbreaks](#) caused by salmonella, E. coli O157, listeria and campylobacter in the United States between 1998 and 2012. The researchers focused on these four pathogens due to the frequency and severity of the illnesses they cause, and because targeted prevention programs can have a significant impact on them.

The report, along with other data, may help lead to new regulations and other measures to reduce the number of [foodborne illness](#) outbreaks, officials said.

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

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