

Data on foodborne disease outbreaks at your fingertips

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Redesign of CDC website simplifies access to years of data, agency says.

(HealthDay)—With one in six Americans infected with foodborne disease—sometimes called "food poisoning"—every year, U.S. health officials have upgraded an online resource for local health investigators and wary consumers.

Tracking and reporting foodborne illnesses caused by germs such as salmonella and E. coli is key to understanding how they affect health, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

With this redesign to the CDC website, the agency said users can more easily sort through almost two decades of data on [foodborne illnesses](#) reported to the CDC by local and state health departments.

"Sometimes people want to know how many [outbreaks](#) occurred in

certain areas or over certain time periods, or what foods were associated with those outbreaks, or how many people got sick or were hospitalized or died. Our intention is to make CDC's foodborne outbreak surveillance data easily accessible," according to a CDC news release.

An outbreak occurs when two or more people get the same illness after eating the same contaminated [food](#). Many outbreaks occur if food is prepared or served by a food worker with improperly washed hands, the CDC says.

The redesigned CDC site contains data compiled on outbreaks caused by intestinal bacterial, viral, parasitic and chemical agents from 1998 to 2014.

What if you get sick while eating someplace and want to know if there were contributing factors? For instance, was the food kept at room temperature for too long? Users can search by year, state, location of food preparation, or specific germ for answers to these and other questions.

New maps, interactive features, graphs and tables also allow outbreak searches by specific foods and ingredients. "Quick stats" are available, along with more in-depth information on numbers of illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths associated with these illnesses.

In the event of an outbreak, public [health](#) investigators can search for the foods and the germs associated with past outbreaks to help pinpoint possible contaminated food sources, the CDC said. Reporters and others can also use the database to understand recent or ongoing outbreaks of foodborne illness.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers their updated food safety site [here](#).

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