

# CDC warns of listeria outbreak tied to cheese, yogurt

February 7 2024, by Ernie Mundell

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Two people have died and 23 have been hospitalized in a years-long outbreak of listeria illness that's finally been traced to one company's

cheeses, yogurts and other dairy products.

That's the message from a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [alert](#) sent out on Feb. 6.

All of the [dairy products](#), sold nationwide and marketed by Rizo-López Foods, are now under recall as of Feb. 5, the CDC said.

According to the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#), Rizo-López Foods sells queso fresco, cotija cheese, yogurts and other dairy products under a myriad of brand names, including Tio Francisco, Don Francisco, Rizo Bros, Rio Grande and other brands.

A full list of the recalled products can be found in the [company's news release](#).

"Interviews with sick people and recent Listeria findings in cheese and a production facility show that queso fresco and cotija made by Rizo-López Foods are making people in this outbreak sick," the CDC said in its statement.

The FDA notes that the 2024 outbreak is merely part of an ongoing outbreak that dates back a decade.

"CDC investigated this outbreak in 2017 and 2021," the FDA noted, but at that time "there was not enough information to identify a specific brand."

However, "a sample of Rizo Bros Aged Cotija tested positive for Listeria monocytogenes during sampling conducted by the Hawaii State Department of Health's Food and Drug Branch in January 2024," the FDA noted. Genome sequencing later matched the listeria germ that was behind the prior illnesses as the same bacterium found in the Rizo Bros

products.

So far, illnesses have been recorded in 11 states: California (eight cases), Arizona and Colorado (four cases each), Texas and Tennessee (two cases each) and Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Nevada, Oregon and Washington (one case each).

Listeria is the third leading cause of [food](#)-borne illness in the United States, the CDC says.

Pregnant women are 10 times more likely than others to get a Listeria infection, according to the CDC, and infection during pregnancy results in fetal loss in about 20% of cases and newborn death in 3% of cases.

Others at increased risk include seniors 65 and older and people with weakened immune systems, the CDC says. About 87% of cases not associated with pregnancy need hospitalization, and about one in six patients die.

Common symptoms include fever, muscle aches and tiredness, the CDC says. Symptoms usually start within two weeks of eating food tainted with Listeria, but they can start as early as the same day or as late as 10 weeks later.

The CDC recommends that consumers clean their refrigerator, container and any surfaces that may have touched the recalled product. Listeria can survive in a refrigerator and can easily spread to other foods and surfaces.

**More information:** Find out more about listeria at the [Mayo Clinic](#).

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