



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

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## Food Safety Tips to Reduce Risk of Salmonella and other Foodborne Illness

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) website provides information on the FDA update of the Salmonella in raw tomato investigation and includes a list of states and countries unaffected by the recent tomato recall. Visit <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html>.

The FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition maintains a gateway website that provides links to selected government food safety-related information: <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>.

Currently, raw red plum, red Roma or red round tomatoes should **not** be eaten unless they were grown in specific states or countries that the FDA has cleared. Refer to the website identified in the first paragraph. Consumers should also be aware that raw tomatoes are often used in the preparation of fresh salsa, guacamole, and pico de gallo, are part of fillings for tortillas, and are used in other dishes.

If you are experiencing diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps, consult with your primary care physician for diagnosis and treatment. Infection is usually diagnosed by culture of a stool sample. The illness usually lasts 4 – 7 days. Although most people recover without treatment, severe infections may occur. Infants, elderly persons, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely than others to develop a more severe illness. When this occurs, *Salmonella* may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and then to other body sites, and can in rare cases be fatal, unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics. In these circumstances hospital inpatient treatment may be necessary.

The Sarasota County Health Department reminds everyone to take precautions with raw tomatoes to prevent salmonella and other foodborne illness.

- Refrigerate within 2 hours or discard cut, peeled, or cooked tomatoes.
- Avoid purchasing bruised or damaged tomatoes and discard any that appear spoiled.
- Thoroughly wash all tomatoes under running water.
- Keep tomatoes that will be consumed raw separate from raw meats, raw seafood, and raw produce items.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot water and soap when switching between types of food products.

Most communicable diseases including Salmonella can also be prevented with frequent, thorough hand washing. Use soap and water for 20 seconds especially after using the restroom, changing diapers, handling raw meat, and after having contact with pets and reptiles.

For health/medical questions about salmonella, residents should call the Sarasota County Health Department's Communicable Disease Control Office at 941-861-2873. For food safety specific questions, call the Sarasota County Health Department's Environmental Health Office at 941-861-6133.

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