

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE USE
June 18, 2010

Contacts: Doug Schultz
MDH Communications Office
651-201-4993

Kirk Smith
MDH Foodborne Diseases
651-201-5414

Michael Schommer
MDA Communications Office
651-201-6629

Two Minnesota cases of *Salmonella* infection linked to national recall of frozen meals

Consumers reminded to always cook frozen meals thoroughly

Two recent cases of salmonellosis in Minnesota have been linked to frozen chicken and rice meals being recalled nationally, state health and agriculture officials said today.

ConAgra Foods Packaged Foods of Iowa is recalling all Marie Callender's brand Cheesy Chicken and Rice frozen meals from stores, regardless of production date, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The products were distributed to retailers nationwide.

The products are being recalled after the company was informed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of an investigation involving 30 people in 15 states who have been diagnosed with infection with a rare type of *Salmonella* called *Salmonella* Chester. Eight of the cases reported eating this product in April and May 2010 prior to becoming ill. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) determined that there have been two cases of infection with *Salmonella* Chester of the outbreak strain in Minnesota, and that both cases ate the Marie Callender's product that subsequently was recalled. Both cases are females. One is a child and one is an adult. One resides in the metro area and one resides in outstate Minnesota. One of the cases was hospitalized, but both have recovered.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture isolated *Salmonella* Chester from an intact package of Marie Callender's Cheesy Chicken and Rice collected from the home of one of the ill people. This package was purchased at the same time as a similar package that was consumed just prior to the case's onset of illness.

The recall specifically includes 13-ounce packages of Marie Callender's Cheesy Chicken & Rice White Meat Chicken and Broccoli over Rice Topped with Rich Cheddar Sauce." More information is available at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Recall_036_2010_Release/index.asp

Anyone with this product in their freezers should discard it and not consume it. Consumers with questions about the recall can contact ConAgra Foods at 1-866-484-9610.

MDH and MDA officials urge consumers to always follow all cooking and preparation instructions on the label of frozen entrees. Special attention to proper heating is important to ensure the entrees are fully cooked and all ingredients reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F. Consumers should use a food thermometer to make sure the entrees reach at least 165°F.

-more-

Symptoms of salmonellosis include diarrhea, abdominal pain and cramps and fever. Symptoms usually begin within 12 to 72 hours after exposure, but can begin up to a week after exposure. *Salmonella* infections usually resolve in 5-7 days, but approximately 20 percent of cases require hospitalization. In rare cases, *Salmonella* infection can lead to death, particularly in the elderly or those with weakened immune systems. Anyone who has become ill after eating this product should see their health care provider.

Approximately 575 to 700 cases of salmonellosis are reported each year in Minnesota. More information on *Salmonella* and how to prevent it can be found on the MDH Web site at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/salmonellosis/index.html>.

-MDH-