



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Public Health Warns Against Illegally Made Mexican-Style Cheese

SACRAMENTO — California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today warned the public about the danger of consuming illegally manufactured Mexican-style soft cheeses, often sold by street vendors.

“These cheeses are often made with raw, unpasteurized milk and under unsanitary conditions,” said Dr. Smith. “We are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of reported *Salmonella* cases, particularly in the Hispanic community.”

Since November 2015, at least 50 patients have been infected with three different strains of *Salmonella*. No deaths have been reported, but hospitalization has been required in several cases. The investigation into these cases is ongoing, but several patients have reported consuming potentially unpasteurized Mexican-style cheese purchased from street vendors before they became ill.

Symptoms of *Salmonella* infection include fever, abdominal cramps and diarrhea which may be bloody. While most individuals recover in four to seven days without medical intervention, some may develop complications that require hospitalization. Infants, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems are at highest risk for more severe illness. CDPH recommends consumers experiencing any ill effects after consuming soft cheeses should consult their health care provider.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) recommends purchasing cheeses made by licensed manufacturers and kept in refrigerated cases at retail stores. More safety information is available through CDFA’s, “Illegal Cheese Can Make You Sick!” campaign in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

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