



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KCHD Recommends Vigilance after Cantaloupe Recall

GRAND RAPIDS – The recall of cantaloupe from Heeren Brothers Produce has the Kent County Health Department recommending those who may have eaten it to contact a health care provider if they notice symptoms of illness in the coming weeks, especially those who may already be at high risk for illness. The FDA tested the cantaloupe and says it found the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes* which can cause the infection Listeriosis in some people. Listeriosis can be fatal in high-risk populations.

The Kent County Health Department has not received any complaints of illness due to the cantaloupe recall as of August 6. "Listeriosis infection has an incubation period that ranges from three days to ten weeks," said Adam London, Administrative Health Officer of Kent County. "We are concerned about people who are vulnerable to illness: newborns, older adults, those with compromised immune systems, and women who are pregnant."

Listeriosis is a foodborne illness that causes about 1600 infections annually in the United States. Symptoms of Listeriosis include fever and muscle aches, sometimes preceded by diarrhea, stomach cramping or vomiting. If you start to notice these symptoms and believe you may have eaten a potentially contaminated cantaloupe, contact your health care provider immediately. In pregnant women, Listeriosis can cause a variety of health complications for the fetus, including miscarriage and stillbirth. Other symptoms include headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, and convulsions. Even though Listeriosis is treatable with antibiotics, it has a high death rate among the food-borne infections.

If you believe you have the cantaloupe that has been recalled, you should throw it away immediately. There are tips from the FDA regarding melon safety:

Consumers and food preparers should wash their hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds *before* and *after* handling any whole melon, such as cantaloupe, watermelon, or honeydew.

Scrub the surface of melons, such as cantaloupes, with a clean produce brush under running water and dry them with a clean cloth or paper towel before cutting. Sanitize your scrub brush after each use, to avoid transferring bacteria between melons.

Promptly consume cut melon or refrigerate promptly. Keep your cut melon refrigerated at, or less than 40 degrees F (32-34 degrees F is best), for no more than 7 days. Discard cut melons left at room temperature for more than 4 hours.

More information on Listeriosis can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/>.

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.