

Food Recall Basics for Consumers

According to recent research (Rutgers University Food Policy Institute, April 2009) most Americans say they pay close attention to news reports about food recalls, and 81% say that when they hear about a food recall they tell others. Yet fewer than 60% of Americans have *ever* checked their homes for a recalled food item. This suggests that, for many Americans, food recalls are seen as important, but not particularly relevant to themselves.

The first thing you should know is that food recalls are issued for your safety and should not cause panic. The most important thing you can do to protect yourself and your family is to be informed and pay attention to guidance issued when a major food recall occurs. Food recall notices are given in the news, at your local grocery store, or online at www.recalls.gov. Understand that the recall of one product does not mean all forms of that product are a potential problem. Occasionally recalls will be expanded to include additional products as more information is gathered.

To identify if a recalled product is in your home, match identifying marks on the product with the recall notice details such as:

- Product name
- Brand
- Container codes
- Container size

Note that identifying information may vary by type of food product.

If you determine that a recalled product is in your home:

- Do *not* eat the product.
- Dispose of the product carefully.
- Do *not* provide the product to others (e.g.: do not give to food bank, your pet, etc.).
- Do *not* puncture or otherwise open cans.

Do one of two things:

- Return the product to the place of purchase for a refund.

OR

- Dispose of the product *following the instructions provided in the recall notice* to assure it will not be consumed by anyone.

If you handle the recalled food product, remember to wash your hands thoroughly with warm water and soap for 20 seconds after handling the product.

The information presented here is from the Be Food Safe food safety program created by the Partnership for Food Safety Education. More information on food recalls is available at www.befoodsafe.org/recallbasics. For more information about food safety in the home, call the Fairfax County Health Department Food Safety Section at 703-246-2444, TTY 703-591-6435 or visit the Web site at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food>.