

SURVEILLANCE REPORT

Summary of *Listeria monocytogenes* Outbreak Linked to Silk® Brand Plant-based Refrigerated Beverages in Ontario

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Introduction

This report provides an epidemiologic summary of confirmed *Listeria monocytogenes* (*L. monocytogenes*) cases in Ontario linked to Silk® brand plant-based refrigerated beverages. Information included in this summary is current as of October 9, 2024. For further information regarding *L. monocytogenes*, visit Public Health Ontario's (PHO) [Listeriosis](#)¹ webpage.

For information on additional cases outside of Ontario linked to the national plant-based refrigerated beverage outbreak, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Public Health Notice](#).²

Investigation Summary

This report describes a provincial outbreak investigation of 13 *Listeria* cases infected with the same genetic strain of *L. monocytogenes*. Case illness onset dates ranged from August 2023 to July 2024 ([Figure 1](#)) with cases distributed across six public health units in Southwestern Ontario.

Twelve of the 13 cases (92.3%) reported consuming Silk® brand plant-based refrigerated beverages prior to illness onset. It was not possible to obtain information related to plant-based refrigerated beverages for one case. The same genetic strain of *L. monocytogenes* that caused illness in individuals (i.e., cases of illness) was also found in open samples of Silk® brand plant-based refrigerated beverages collected from the homes of cases, where available.

A national [food recall warning](#)³ was issued on July 8, 2024 for various Silk® and Great Value brand plant-based refrigerated beverages and Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health issued an accompanying [public statement](#)⁴ on July 9, 2024.

As no new cases have been reported since early August, the outbreak appears to be over and the outbreak investigation has been closed.

Figure 1. Outbreak-confirmed *L. monocytogenes* cases, January 2023 to August 2024: Ontario

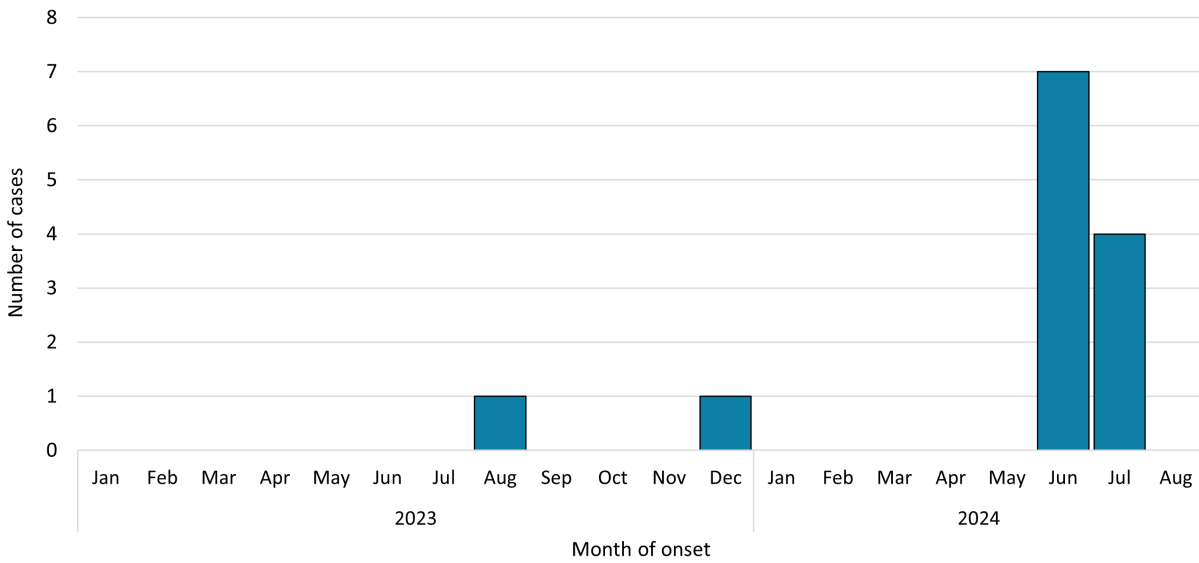


Table 1. Case characteristics for outbreak-confirmed *L. monocytogenes* cases: Ontario

Severity	Outbreak-confirmed (n=13)	Proportion (%)
Hospitalizations	11	84.6
Deaths	3	23.1

Gender	Outbreak-confirmed (n=13)	Proportion (%)
Female	9	69.2
Male	4	30.8

Age (years)	Outbreak-confirmed (n=13)	Proportion (%)
<15	1	7.7
15 - 29	0	0.0
30 - 44	2	15.4
45 - 59	4	30.8
60 - 74	1	7.7
>75	5	38.5

Technical Notes

Confirmed cases in Ontario linked to the outbreak include those who are a resident or visitor to Ontario with laboratory confirmation of *L. monocytogenes*, their isolates genetically match other outbreak isolates by whole genome sequencing and they experience symptom onset or specimen collection on or after August 1, 2023.

Data Sources

- Ontario Ministry of Health, integrated Public Health Information System (iPHIS) database, extracted by Public Health Ontario on [13 Sep 2024].
- Public Health Ontario Laboratory Information Management System as of October 1, 2024.
- Obtained from case questionnaires administered public health unit staff investigating the outbreak.

Data Caveats

- Passive surveillance systems, such as iPHIS, which rely primarily on mandatory health care provider and laboratory reports of illness can be characterized by under-reporting of the true burden of illness. The resulting degree of under-reporting may result due to a variety of factors, such as disease awareness, health care seeking behaviours, availability of health care, severity of illness, clinical practice, methods of laboratory testing and reporting behaviours; however, the extent of under-reporting is unknown.
- Hospitalization and death may be underreported in iPHIS, with the degree of underreporting influenced by the severity of illness and associated outcomes (e.g., less underreporting if illness or outcomes are more severe) and the timing of the event (i.e., there is likely less underreporting if hospitalization or death occurs shortly after symptom onset or before investigation of the case by the PHU is completed). In general, the degree of underreporting is influenced by a combination of factors, including incomplete follow-up of cases (e.g., case is not reachable), incomplete or late entry of data in iPHIS, and the occurrence of outcomes after follow-up has been completed.
- iPHIS is a dynamic disease reporting system which allows ongoing updates to data previously entered. As a result, data extracted from iPHIS represent a snap shot at the time of extraction and may differ from previous or subsequent reports.

References

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4. Ontario. Ministry of Health. Statement: Ontario warns about product recall due to Listeria contamination [Internet]. Toronto; ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2024 Jul 9 [cited 2024 Dec 3]. Available from: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/statement/1004817/ontario-warns-about-product-recall-due-to-listeria-contamination>

Citation

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