

Salsa, guacamole dips tied to food poisoning: CDC

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Contaminated salsa and guacamole dips are common causes of [food poisoning](#) in restaurants, and food workers need to take greater care, researchers told a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention meeting on Monday.

They said nearly one of every 25 traceable outbreaks of foodborne disease between 1998 and 2008 began with one of the increasingly popular dips, which are made using onions, tomatoes, peppers, avocados, herbs and other ingredients.

"Possible reasons salsa and guacamole can pose a risk for foodborne illness is that they may not be refrigerated appropriately and are often made in large batches, so even a small amount of contamination can affect many customers," said Magdalena Kendall of the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education.

"Awareness that salsa and guacamole can transmit foodborne illness, particularly in restaurants, is key to preventing future outbreaks," Kendall, who worked on the study, said in a statement.

"Salsa and guacamole often contain diced raw produce, including hot peppers, tomatoes and cilantro, each of which has been implicated in past outbreaks."

Kendall and colleagues analyzed all outbreaks of foodborne illness reported to the [CDC](#). None were associated with salsa or guacamole before 1984, they found, but by 1998 to 2008 the two dips accounted for 3.9 percent of outbreaks traced to restaurants.

"We want restaurants and anyone preparing fresh salsa and guacamole at home to be aware that these foods containing raw ingredients should be carefully prepared and refrigerated to help prevent illness," Kendall said.

In March a coalition of consumer and public health groups said foodborne illnesses cost the United States \$152 billion in health-related expenses each year.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill a year ago to reorganize the convoluted U.S. food safety system, but the Senate has yet to act, despite broad bipartisan agreement on the issue.

The CDC estimates that 76 million people in the United States get sick each year with foodborne illness and 5,000 die.