

## Communication 23/2026

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### Salmonella and chocolate products

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In Germany, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2026, a manufacturer of chocolate products issued a product recall for certain batches of a hazelnut nougat cream. The reason was the detection of *Salmonella* in the product during internal quality control.

After *Campylobacter* bacteria, *Salmonella* is the most common bacterial cause of intestinal diseases in Germany. High-risk foods include, in particular, undercooked or raw meat and products made from it, unpasteurised eggs and egg products, and plant-based foods.

Chocolate products have repeatedly played a significant role in disease outbreaks in the past. In fatty products such as chocolate spread, even small amounts of bacteria can be enough to cause illness. The low infectious dose is attributed to the fact that the *Salmonella* in the high-fat product is very well protected against the acidic conditions in the human stomach and largely reaches the intestines alive, where it can cause an infection.

The illness known as salmonellosis is often accompanied by diarrhoea and abdominal pain, but fever, nausea and vomiting are also possible. Children in their early years and people whose immune systems are weakened, for example due to old age or pre-existing medical conditions, are particularly at risk.

*Salmonella* is rarely detected in chocolate products. Nevertheless, there have been known disease outbreaks caused by *Salmonella* in chocolate. The most recent disease outbreak in Germany linked to chocolate, of which the BfR has awareness, occurred in 2022 and was caused by the *Salmonella* Typhimurium strain. In 2025, the [food warning portal](#) published by the German Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) listed only one instance of a vegan chocolate product being recalled due to the detection of *Salmonella*. The BfR is not aware of any cases of illness in connection with the 2025 food warning.

Chocolate products not only protect the *Salmonella* during passage through the stomach, but also provide a particularly favourable environment for survival, offering good protection against adverse environmental conditions. *Salmonella* can survive in chocolate for up to several years. Due to the low water content of chocolate and the protective effect of the fat, they exhibit very high heat resistance. Bacterial proliferation is generally not possible due to

the high sugar content and the consistency of the products. Normally, between 10,000 and 100,000 bacteria are required to cause an infection. Protected by the high-fat matrix, fewer than 1,000 cells in chocolate products can lead to an infection. A further complicating factor with chocolate is that children are a key target group for these products.

The detection of *Salmonella* in chocolate and cocoa is also a challenge. Special methods had to be developed to reliably detect *Salmonella* in cocoa-containing products, as various reactions are interfered with by the ingredients in cocoa.

The batches specified by the manufacturer in the product recall should under no circumstances be consumed or used for processing in any other way in the kitchen, but must be disposed of immediately. Although *Salmonella* is a particular hazard to vulnerable consumer groups, its occurrence can also occur in otherwise healthy individuals.

If the occurrence of diarrhoea is accompanied by typical symptoms of salmonellosis<sup>(1)</sup> – particularly in children – it is recommended that a doctor be consulted. Products such as nut nougat cream should be considered as a potential source of infection and the remaining product should be kept available for analysis.

In Germany, responsibility for food monitoring authorities lies with the German federal states ("Laender"). The German Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) receives reports from the German federal states regarding foodstuffs that may pose health risks to consumers. It is the national contact point for the European Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed.

Further information on human salmonellosis is published by the relevant public health authorities and the Robert Koch Institute (RKI).

<sup>1</sup> Typical symptoms of salmonellosis according to Infektionsschutz.de: Sudden diarrhoea, headaches and abdominal pain, general malaise and, occasionally, vomiting are common symptoms of salmonella infection. A mild fever is also frequently present. The symptoms often persist for several days and then subside on their own. In rare cases, the disease can take a severe course, such as a bloodstream infection (sepsis), sometimes accompanied by a high fever.

**Further information on the BfR website about *Salmonella***

Questions and answers on protection against *Salmonella* infection  
<https://www.bfr.bund.de/fragen-und-antworten/thema/fragen-und-antworten-zum-schutz-vor-infektionen-mit-salmonellen/> (in German)

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