

Web Site Offers Updates On Peanut Products

Tallahassee Democrat

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With all of the “talk” of recalls from **peanut** tainted products of late, folks have been asking questions about food safety. Many peanut related questions begin with “Can I eat ... ?” Concerned consumers should pay a visit to the Food and Drug Administration peanut butter recall list,

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/peanutbutterrecall/index.cfm>

Products of concern can be searched for a variety of ways on this website.

- UPC Code (Example: 54807-59114)
- Product Description (Example: Crackers with Peanut Butter)
- Brand Name
- Any combination of: brand name, description, UPC code

As well, the Center for Disease Control has a toll-free hotline. The CDC's 24/7 toll-free public inquiries hotline (1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636) offers telephone assistance looking up particular foods that appear on the recall list.

Products that you never dreamed of may contain a peanut by-product being recalled. For instance [frozen and canned fruit and vegetables, ice-cream products, pet foods, pre-packaged canned and frozen meals are all on the Product Recalls](#) list. How did this happen? To simplify, the recalled products contain at least one ingredient originating from Peanut Corporation of America (PCA) peanut processing operations. Peanuts, at these processing centers are processed into peanut paste, peanut butter, oil roasted and dry roasted nuts, peanut meal and peanut granules. The “ingredient” is then sold to manufacturers. Manufacturers transform the ingredient into thousands of products. Products are distributed and sold to bakeries, national food chains, local supermarkets, convenience stores, vending machines, independent restaurants, ice-cream shops, etc... Businesses in turn sell the manufactured items to consumers. Many hospital food services, nursing homes, school cafeterias are involved in the distribution process; they are using the product in their food service operations.

As of the middle of February, 2009, ***nearly 2000 products and 250 brands of products, shipped to hundreds of establishments - including distributors and manufacturers are being recalled. This list includes human and pet food.***

Back to the question, “Can I eat....?” In exercising an abundance of caution NO! The listed products are being recalled for a reason. The person/animal eating the product might get sick from Salmonella Typhimurium. Salmonella can occur after consuming only a small amount of the salmonella bacteria. Most common symptoms of salmonella poisoning include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, vomiting and fever. (Please note, symptoms don’t always appear immediately and folks many not even remember what they ate). If you are a normal, healthy individual a bout of salmonella might not be a big deal. However, if you are an individual with compromised health, a good example being a person recovering from an illness, your immune system is already taxed and that annoyance of salmonella poisoning could become a major catastrophe for you.

Additionally, salmonella can be contagious in that a person infected with salmonella can transfer the bacteria through improper hand washing. Salmonella is often present in a person’s feces for several weeks after symptoms have ended.

The FDA urges consumers to:

- Check FDA’s web site to determine which products have been recalled and will be recalled in the coming days.
- Dispose of **any** product that is on the recall list in a safe manner. (this prevents other people or animals from eating it)
- Consumers are urged to wash their hands after handling potentially contaminated products.
- If consumers are unsure whether a peanut-containing product is potentially contaminated, **they should avoid consuming it or feeding it to their pet** until they obtain more information regarding the product.
- Persons who think they may have become ill from eating peanut products are advised to consult their health care providers.
- Contact the outlet where the food was purchased - they may offer to take it off of your hands and refund your purchase price.

Why isn’t commercial peanut butter being recalled? Commercial peanut butter does not contain any of the select “ingredients” manufactured by Peanut Corporation of America. Many commercial products are made from start to finish in the same factory thus bypassing the breadth of the distribution pattern found in many of the contaminated recall products.

Have a question? Contact the University of Florida IFAS - Leon County Extension office at 606-5203, weekdays 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m.

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