A voluntary recall of cantaloupes has been issued in many states across the country, including Missouri, due to the potential contamination of listeria. L. monocytogenes is a bacterium that can contaminate foods and cause a mild non-invasive illness (called listerial gastroenteritis) or a severe, sometimes life-threatening, illness (called invasive listeriosis). Persons who have the greatest risk of experiencing listeriosis after consuming foods contaminated with L. monocytogenes are fetuses and neonates who are infected after the mother is exposed to L. monocytogenes during pregnancy, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems. While FDA is working with the local retail locations to remove the cantaloupes from the shelves, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department would like to remind the community about proper melon handling techniques that, when used, will help keep fruits safe and free of contamination. The federal Food and Drug Administration issued the following guidelines for proper fruit handling:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before cutting melons.
- Before cutting, wash the outer surface of the melon thoroughly with cool tap water to remove surface dirt.
- Wash all food-contact equipment and utensils that contact cut melons (cutting boards, knives, etc.) thoroughly with hot soapy water, rinse, sanitize, and air-dry.
- Use a barrier such as gloves, deli paper, or an appropriate utensil to touch cut melons. Do not touch cut melons with bare hands.
- Maintain the temperature of cut melons at 41°F or below.
- Date mark cut melons that are held more than 24 hours to indicate that they must be consumed or discarded within 7 days.
- Cut melons may be consumed for a maximum of 4 hours without temperature control, and, if not eaten, must be thrown away at the end of 4 hours.

People with weakened immune systems, elderly, and pregnant women should pay close attention to using proper food handling techniques to minimize risk of illness from bacteria and other illness.

If you have cantaloupe in your home and have questions about the origin of the product, please contact the place of purchase for more information. If your cantaloupe is marked from the Rocky Ford region, please contact the place of purchase for information on disposal.

For those that have consumed cantaloupe and are experiencing any symptoms that could be associated with listeria, including fever, muscle aches, diarrhea or other gastrointestinal symptoms should contact their health care provider.
Please visit the Food and Drug Administration for more information on the recall.

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