



FOOD FOR THOUGHT – TIPS FOR TRACKING FOOD RECALLS

Posted on April 27, 2024 by Teresa Murray, Consumer Watchdog Director | Arizona

PIRG Education Fund



None of us should have to worry about finding shards of metal and plastic or undeclared allergens in the food on our plates. Nor should we have to worry that everything from soup to nuts could land us in the hospital.

While the majority of the food Arizonans eat is safe, in the last six months, [lead-tainted applesauce](#) has sickened at least 500 children and [cantaloupe](#) contaminated with Salmonella has led to 400 illnesses and six deaths nationwide --- just two examples among hundreds of food items recalled last year. A new report released by the Arizona PIRG Education Fund, [Food for Thought 2024](#), found that nationwide food and beverage recalls through the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) increased by 8% in 2023, hitting the highest levels since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Clearly, all food producers and packagers need to focus on cleanliness and disclose allergens that could make people sick or kill them. Manufacturers need to consistently inspect equipment, test food, and properly label packages before they end up on grocery store shelves. And the [notification system for food recalls needs to get better](#).

However, until that happens, please consider the following tips to help protect yourself and your family:

Stop by the customer service counter or call the grocery store you shop at and ask how they handle recall notifications. Do they put out automated calls, texts, or emails if you have a loyalty card and provide contact information? Do they put signs in the store about recalls? **If your grocery store sends out recall alerts**, it is worth signing up as the store will likely find out about a recall before government regulators issue an announcement or it hits the news.

Consider shopping only at stores with good recall notification policies. This is especially important if you buy products that are frequently recalled such as produce, or if there are people in your home with severe allergies, or children, pregnant women, elderly people or anyone who is *immunocompromised*, as they are most likely to get really sick from foodborne contamination.

Get a good phone app. The free Food Recalls & Alerts phone app ([Apple](#) and [Android](#)) will allow you to get recall notifications all in one place on your phone. You can request real-time push alerts to your phone, or just check the app recall list as often as you'd like. You can choose just serious microbe recalls such as Listeria, Salmonella, or E. Coli, just ones for pets, or all of them. **Sign up for recall alerts through Twitter (X):** @FDArecalls and @USDAFoodSafety.

If you find an issue with a food in your home, help others by reporting it: For meat, poultry, fish and egg products, file a complaint [online](#)

[here](#) or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854. For all other food and beverage items, including pet food, file a complaint [online here](#) or call the FDA's Main Emergency Number at 1-866-300-4374. For issues with restaurant food, call your local health department.

