

TWO pregnant women, a newly married couple, a man with a donor kidney and a child as young as seven are among dozens of victims of a salmonella outbreak at the InterContinental Adelaide. On Sunday, July 31, more than 400 hotel guests ate the popular breakfast buffet at the luxury hotel's Riverside Restaurant.

Like every other Sunday morning, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages and hash browns were on offer. But a yet-to-be-determined source in the hotel kitchen made at least 66 people severely ill, putting 19 in hospital.

Victims have told *The Advertiser* of their horror ordeal. Most say they were sick for at least a few days and many for more than one week.

Latest figures from SA Health reveal there has been 1174 reported cases of salmonella this year, not including all the InterContinental cases, up from 841 at the same time last year.

One woman, who wanted to remain anonymous, described the pain after eating the breakfast as "worse than labour".

"I was in absolute agony rolling around in pain, vomiting and had severe diarrhoea," she said. Symptoms included diarrhoea, severe abdominal pain, vomiting, headache and dehydration.

Couple Jackalyn and Harry Hirniak, who lives with a donor kidney after he had a transplant 15 years ago, were meant to be celebrating Jackalyn's 60th birthday. Instead, they were struck down with salmonella poisoning after eating at the buffet that day.

It resulted in Mr Hirniak, 55, of Mt Compass, spending a week at the Flinders Medical Centre's renal unit, where he was closely monitored by doctors who feared he would need to go back on kidney dialysis.

"They (doctors) basically told him if the (toxin) levels didn't go down or continued to rise that the kidney was in serious trouble," Mrs Hirniak said.

The InterContinental is working with SA Health and the Adelaide City Council to determine the cause.



Hundreds of people across Australia this year have fallen sick from different strains of salmonella linked to lettuce, bean sprouts and rockmelon - and recently dozens fell ill after eating a breakfast at the InterContinental Adelaide. Health Reporter **KATRINA STOKES** investigates.



SHELVED: A salmonella scare earlier this year forced supermarkets to issue a nationwide recall of pre-packed salad products and, left, Jackalyn and Harry Hirniak, who were struck down after eating at the InterContinental Adelaide.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: SALMONELLA OUTBREAKS THIS YEAR

LEAFY GREENS

February 2016: More than 100 people nationally tested positive to the salmonella anatum strain, which has been linked to a variety of salad leaf products, including Coles and Woolworths-branded pre-packed bags of baby spinach and rocket, grown by Tripod Farmers in Victoria. Other companies, such as Lite n' Easy, also used the lettuce in their products. The scare forced the supermarkets to issue a nationwide recall.

BEAN SPROUTS

April 2016: Consumers and cafe owners were warned not to eat or serve raw bean sprouts following a surge in a particular strain of salmonella called "saintpaul" in SA. Over a period of 11 days in April, a total of 108 cases were reported. Usually, the state records just 15 to 20 cases each year. Since the start of December, more than 240 cases of the strain were reported and more than 40 people were admitted to hospital. The mystery source of the con-

tamination was traced back to a wash tray in a family-run factory in SA.

ROCKMELON

August 2016: Supermarkets were forced to strip all rockmelon from shelves after dozens of people across the nation fell ill after eating it. Pregnant women, infants and the elderly were told to steer clear of the popular fruit after an outbreak of salmonella hittingfloss - a rarer form of salmonella - was found in rockmelons from a Northern Territory grower.

BUFFET BREAKFAST

July/August 2016: At least 66 fell ill, including 19 admitted to hospital, after eating the buffet breakfast at the InterContinental Adelaide Riverside Restaurant on Sunday, July 31. The youngest victim is believed to be aged seven. The source of the contamination is being investigated by SA Health and the Adelaide City Council. At least 16 victims have contacted law firm Duncan Basheer Hannon to determine whether they can seek compensation.

General manager Colin McCandless said the hotel was following protocol and maintaining "close contact with any guests who have proactively advised us they are not feeling well".

SA Health chief medical officer Professor Paddy Phillips

said the number of salmonella cases may have risen due to a number of reasons.

"There are two things that go with notifications - the number of people sick in the community and the second is, the number of times we get told," he said. "If we don't get

notified we can't include them in the numbers."

Prof Phillips said there "may well be an increase in the number of cases (but) there's also been an increase in the amount of testing being done".

"The community is heeding the message that if they get

sick, they should see their GP," he said. "GPs are doing the right thing by taking a stool sample, sending it to the laboratory to see what bug is causing it ... then we can know whether it's a virus or a bacteria." So far this year, people across the nation have fallen

sick with salmonella found in lettuce, bean sprouts and rockmelon. The latest scare in rockmelon - grown by farmers in the Northern Territory - was traced by a team at SA Health.

"If we see a real spike then we go and talk to the people," Prof Phillips said.



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