



## **LISTERIOSIS (Listeria Infection) FACT SHEET**

### **What is Listeriosis?**

Listeriosis, (Listeria infection) is a serious infection usually caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria called *Listeria monocytogenes*. Though *Listeria* is all around our environment, most *Listeria* infections in people are from eating contaminated foods. This type of bacteria is found in soil, water, and sometimes on plants. Animals can carry the bacterium without appearing ill and can contaminate foods of animal origin, such as meats and dairy products.

### **How can you be exposed to listeriosis?**

The disease primarily affects older adults, pregnant women, newborns, and adults with weakened immune systems. However, rarely, persons without these risk factors can also be affected.

### **What are the symptoms of listeriosis?**

In pregnant women, listeriosis may cause flu-like symptoms:

- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Diarrhea
- Upset stomach

If the infection spreads to the nervous system, the symptoms may include:

- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Confusion
- Loss of balance
- Convulsions

Consult a doctor or health care provider if you have these symptoms.

### **How soon after exposure do listeriosis symptoms appear?**

Symptoms of listeriosis can take a few days or even weeks to appear and can be mild. However, you should tell your physician or health care provider if you are pregnant and have eaten the contaminated food, and within 2 months experience flu-like symptoms.

## What is the treatment for listeria infection?

During pregnancy, antibiotics are given to treat listeriosis in the mother. In most cases, the antibiotics also prevent infection of the fetus or newborn. Antibiotics are also given to babies who are born with listeriosis.

## How can listeria infection be prevented?

- **Rinse** raw produce, such as fruits and vegetables, thoroughly under running tap water before eating, cutting, or cooking. Even if the produce will be peeled, it should still be washed first.
- **Scrub** firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- **Dry** the produce with a clean cloth or paper towel.
- **Separate** uncooked meats and poultry from vegetables, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods. Be aware that *Listeria* can grow in foods in the refrigerator.

**Recommendations for persons at higher risk, such as pregnant women, persons with weakened immune systems, and older adults in addition to the recommendations listed above, include:**

### Meats

- Do not eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, cold cuts, other deli meats (e.g., bologna), or fermented or dry sausages unless they are heated to an internal temperature of 165°F or until steaming hot just before serving.
- Avoid getting fluid from hot dog and lunch meat packages on other foods, utensils, and food preparation surfaces, and wash hands after handling hot dogs, luncheon meats, and deli meats.

### Cheeses

- Do not eat soft cheese such as feta, queso blanco, queso fresco, brie, Camembert, blue-veined, or panela (queso panela) unless it is labeled as made with pasteurized milk. Make sure the label says, "*MADE WITH PASTEURIZED MILK.*"

### Seafood

- Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is contained in a cooked dish, such as a casserole, or unless it is a canned or shelf-stable product.
- Refrigerated smoked seafood, such as salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, and mackerel, is most often labeled as "nova-style," "lox," "kippered," "smoked," or "jerky."
  - These fish are typically found in the refrigerator section or sold at seafood and deli counters of grocery stores and delicatessens.
- Canned and shelf stable tuna, salmon, and other fish products are safe to eat.

## Where can I get more information on listeriosis?

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

### Source of Information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Rev. June 2016