



Listeria (Listeriosis)

What is it? Listeriosis is a serious infection caused by the germ *Listeria monocytogenes*. People usually become ill with Listeriosis after eating contaminated food. The disease primarily affects pregnant women, newborns, adults aged 65 and older, and people with weakened immune systems. It's rare for people in other groups to get sick with *Listeria* infection.

How do People get Listeriosis? Listeriosis is usually caused by eating food contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. *Listeria* has been found in various meats, vegetables, seafood, and dairy products. *Listeria* can multiply in refrigerated food that is contaminated. Pasteurization of dairy products and proper cooking are usually adequate to kill the bacteria. In addition, bacteria can also live in the gastrointestinal tract of some individuals who are infected, but do not have symptoms.

What are the symptoms? Common symptoms of *Listeria* include: fever, muscle aches, nausea, and diarrhea. If the infection spreads to the nervous system, other symptoms may develop, including headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, and convulsions. Symptoms usually

begin about 1 - 4 weeks after being exposed to *Listeria*. *Pregnant women* typically experience only fever or flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue and muscle aches, however, infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or life-threatening infection of the newborn.

What should I do if I have symptoms? Contact your health care provider. *Listeria* is generally diagnosed by culturing blood or spinal fluid for the bacteria. Listeriosis is treated with antibiotics.

What should I do if I ate foods that may have been contaminated? If you believe you ate food contaminated with *Listeria*, and do not feel sick, most experts believe you do not need tests or treatment. You should talk with your health care provider if you believe you may have eaten contaminated food and are concerned or pregnant, age 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system. If you believe you have eaten contaminated food, and experience a fever or other symptoms of *Listeria*, contact your provider up to two months after eating the food. This is especially important if you are pregnant, age 65 or older, or have a weakened immune system.

How can I reduce the risk of getting infected? When it comes to *Listeria*, some foods are more risky than others such as: raw sprouts, raw milk, soft cheeses, deli meats and hot dogs, and smoked seafood. **(1)** Heat deli meats and hot dogs until steaming hot before eating. **(2)** Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours in shallow, covered containers and use within 3 - 4 days. **(3)** Avoid cross-contamination in the refrigerator or other places in the kitchen. **(4)** Use a thermometer to make sure your refrigerator is 40°F or lower and your freezer is 0°F or lower (see links below for more information and tips).

For more information on *Listeria* (Listeriosis) visit:

Protect Yourself from *Listeria*:
<https://go.usa.gov/xpb2V>

***Listeria* and Food:**
<https://go.usa.gov/xpb2d>

Learn more CDC:
<https://go.usa.gov/xpb2v>

Learn more FDA:
<https://go.usa.gov/xpb2f>

For more local information, resources, and tools contact:

Your local Military Treatment Facility's Preventive Medicine Office.



Let us know what you think and what we can add to better serve you.