

Listeriosis

What is Listeriosis?

Listeriosis is a rare illness caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria called *Listeria monocytogenes*. *Listeria* bacteria are common in the environment and some raw foods. Eating food that contain *Listeria* bacteria does not cause illness in most people. Although listeriosis is rare, it has a high death rate

What are the symptoms?

The incubation period (between infection and symptoms) can vary from 3 to 70 days, but on average is about 3 weeks. Infections may cause septicemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis (inflammation of the brain). Infection during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth and infection of the newborn.

Symptoms Include: fever, muscle aches, and sometimes gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea and diarrhea. In the more severe form, symptoms also include collapse and shock. If infection spreads to the central nervous system, symptoms such as headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, convulsions and coma can occur. About a third of these patients may die.

How is it spread?

Listeria are widespread throughout nature, being commonly carried by many species both domestic and wild animals. Raw meat, unpasteurized milk, raw fruits and vegetables can be contaminated with bacteria.

People who are at risk can contract listeriosis through eating foods contaminated with the *Listeria* bacteria. Babies can be born with listeriosis if their mothers eat contaminated foods during pregnancy. Outbreaks of illness have been associated with raw milk, soft cheeses, pre-prepared salads, unwashed raw vegetables, pate, cold diced chicken, rockmelon, and pre-cut fruit and fruit salad.

Who are at risk?

Pregnant woman and the fetus, newborns, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems.

How is it prevented?

- To Prevent Listeriosis do the following:
- Avoid high risk foods (See below)
- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, lamb, pork or poultry
- Wash raw vegetables and fruits thoroughly before eating
- Keep raw meat separate from vegetables, cooked foods, and ready to eat foods
- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat and foods that are ready to eat
- Wash your hands before and after preparing food
- Wash your hands after handling animals
- Perishable foods should be stored in a cold (less than 5° Celsius) refrigerator and be washed and eaten ASAP

High Risk Foods
<p>Soft Cheeses: Queso Fresco, Queso Blanco, Panela, Brie, Camembert, Blue-Veined, or Feta **Unless it is labeled as made with pasteurized milk</p>
<p>Raw Sprouts: Alfalfa, Clover, Radish and Mung Bean Sprouts</p>
<p>Melons: Cut right away or refrigerate, do not eat melons that have been refrigerated for more than 7 days or cut and left at room temperature for more than 4 hours</p>
<p>Deli & Processed Meat: Hotdogs, Pates, Lunch Meat, and Cold Cuts</p>
<p>Smokes Seafood/ Chilled Seafood: Smoked salmon (unless cooked and served hot)</p>
<p>Raw (Unpasteurized) Milk: Make sure to check if cheeses, ice-cream, or yogurt is made with raw milk. If it is do not eat.</p>

References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/listeria/prevention.html>

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/listeriosis.pdf>