

LISTERIOSIS

FACT SHEET

What is Listeriosis?

Listeriosis is a serious infection caused by eating food contaminated with the bacterium *Listeria Monocytogenes*. The disease affects primarily persons of advanced age, pregnant women, newborns and adults with weakened immune systems.

Symptoms of Listeriosis

A person with Listeriosis generally has:

- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea or diarrhea

If infection spreads to the nervous system, the following symptoms can occur:

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

Infected pregnant women may experience only a mild, flu-like illness; however, infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage or stillbirth, premature delivery or infection of the newborn.

How do People get Listeriosis?

Listeria infections are caused by eating food contaminated with *Listeria Monocytogenes*. Many wild and domestic animals also carry Listeria. Vegetables can become contaminated from the soil or from contaminated manure used as fertilizer, and infected animals can contaminate meat. Unpasteurized milk or foods made with unpasteurized milk may contain Listeria. Certain processed foods, such as soft cheeses, hot dogs and deli meats, can become contaminated after processing.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Listeriosis

A blood test is often the most effective way to determine whether you have a Listeria infection. In some cases, samples of spinal fluid, urine or amniotic fluid may be tested as well.

Listeria infections are treated with intravenous antibiotics.

How Can I Help Prevent the Spread of Listeriosis?

The general guidelines recommended for the prevention of Listeriosis are similar to those used to help prevent other foodborne illnesses.

- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources such as beef, pork, or poultry
- Wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating
- Keep uncooked meats separate from vegetables, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods
- Avoid unpasteurized milk or foods made from unpasteurized milk
- Wash hands, knives and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods
- Consume perishable and ready-to-eat foods as soon as possible

For more information, contact a Public Health Nurse at the City-County Health Department at 454-6950 or visit www.cchdmt.org or www.cdc.gov

