

# CDRS

Communicable Disease Reporting System

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FACT SHEET

# LISTERIOSIS

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

## Symptoms

Listeriosis causes fever and flu-like symptoms such as:

- fever,
- muscle aches
- nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Symptoms of headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance or convulsions can occur if the infection has spread to the brain or spinal column (meningitis).
- *Listeria* can cause infection of the uterus and cervix, which can result in miscarriages or fetal death especially when the infection has occurred late in pregnancy.

## Transmission

- Possible ways to get this bacteria are through contaminated foods, genital contact, and inhalation from the environment
- The bacteria that causes Listeriosis can be found throughout the environment, such as in dirt, dust, animal feed, water, sewage, house pets, wild animals, and fish
- Outbreaks have been associated with contaminated foods, such as uncooked hot dogs, ready-to-eat lunch meats, undercooked chicken, and unwashed vegetables
- Neonatal infections occur by way of the placenta or through a uterine infection, as well as from passing through the birth canal

## Treatment

- Serious infections are treated with intravenous antibiotics in the hospital.

## Prevention

- 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 raw (unpasteurized) milk or milk products made from raw milk.
- Wash hands, knives, and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods.

## Additional Information

Recommendations for persons at high risk, such as pregnant women, infants, and persons with weakened immune systems, in addition to the recommendations listed above:

- Avoid soft cheeses such as feta, brie, Camembert, blue-veined, and Mexican-style cheese. Hard cheese, processed cheese, and cheeses and yogurt that have been made from pasteurized milk need not be avoided.
- Ready-to-eat foods, such as hot dogs, bologna, raw fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables, should be cooked until steaming hot before eating.
- Leftovers from meals should be thoroughly heated before eating.
- Avoid deli or luncheon meats, and refrigerated meat spreads, pates, or smoked seafood.
- Canned fish, meat spreads, or pates may be eaten, because these are thoroughly cooked in the canning process.

**All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.**

Franklin County



Board of Health

Report Disease With Ease - 24 hours a day

[www.cdrsinfo.com](http://www.cdrsinfo.com)

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