

# FACT SHEET

# Listeriosis

## What is Listeriosis?

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, older adults, and adults with weakened immune systems.

## How is it spread?

Listeria bacteria are widely distributed in soil and water which can contaminate certain foods including unpasteurized milk and cheese, deli meats, poultry, and eggs. A pregnant woman can also transmit the illness to her unborn baby or newborn.

## What are the symptoms?

- Fever
- Flu-like symptoms (muscle aches and fatigue)
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Confusion
- Loss of balance
- Seizures

## How is it prevented?

- Thoroughly cook raw meats.
- Wash raw vegetables well before eating.
- Thoroughly reheat ready-to-eat foods such as hot dogs and deli-style meats before eating.
- Store factory-sealed, unopened packages of lunch meat for no longer than 2 weeks in the refrigerator, and opened packages no longer than 3 to 5 days.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and cheeses, and raw fish.
- Observe all package expiration dates.
- Avoid cross-contamination of ready-to-eat food with raw foods.
- Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours.
- Wash hands, knives, and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods.

## How is it treated?

Listeriosis can be treated with antibiotics. A diagnosis is made when the bacteria is found in the blood, spinal fluid, or amniotic fluid.

*This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*