

LISTERIOSIS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Listeriosis?

*Listeriosis is a serious infection caused by eating food contaminated with bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. The disease affects primarily pregnant women, newborns, 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, unpasteurized soft cheese, deli-style meats, poultry and egg products.
- The fetus and newborn are highly susceptible to transmission from an infected pregnant woman causing miscarriage, stillbirth or serious health problems.
- Elderly and immune-deficient people are also susceptible.

How is it treated?

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

How can we prevent Listeriosis?

- Thoroughly cook raw meats.
- Wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating.
- Thoroughly reheat ready-to-eat foods such as hot dogs and deli-style meats before eating.
- Avoid unpasteurized soft cheeses, raw milk and smoked 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.

SYMPTOMS OF LISTERIOSIS

- Symptoms can occur 3-70 days after exposure.
- Flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, muscle aches, nausea, diarrhea, headache.
- If the nervous system is infected there may be sudden onset of intense headache, stiff neck, nausea and vomiting, confusion, loss of balance, convulsions.
- Infected pregnant women may experience miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery.

LIVINGSTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
2300 E. GRAND RIVER AVE., SUITE 102, HOWELL, MI 48843-7578
(517) 546-9850
www.lchd.org

