

Gila County
Health & Emergency Management

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Listeria (Listeriosis) Fact Sheet

Background

Listeriosis is an illness caused by eating food contaminated with the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*. It is uncommon in healthy people, but can cause severe illness in pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems. Unlike many other germs, *Listeria* can grow in cold temperatures.

Symptoms

Listeriosis can be mild or severe. Symptoms vary, but may include fever, chills, headache, sensitivity to light, muscle aches, nausea, and diarrhea. Healthy people may have mild or no symptoms, but *Listeria* can cause severe illness. Symptoms usually occur around 3 weeks after exposure; the length of illness depends on the severity.



Listeriosis can cause:

- Miscarriage
- Premature birth
- Stillbirth

Transmission

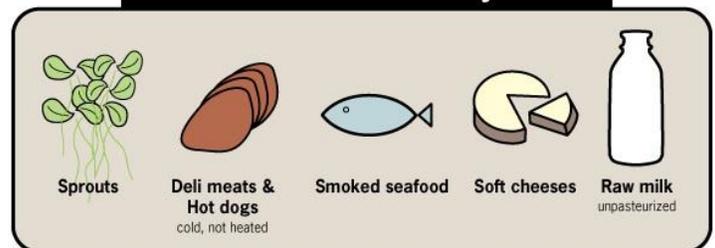
Listeria does not usually spread from person to person. You get listeriosis by eating or drinking contaminated food or beverages, such as:

- Unpasteurized apple juice or cider
- Unpasteurized milk or milk products
- Soft cheeses (brie, queso fresco)
- Ready-to-eat meats (hot dogs, deli meat)

Treatment

Antibiotics can be effective, but must be begun early in the infection. Persons with severe listeriosis usually require hospitalization. Seek medical care if you become sick with fever and muscle aches or stiff neck, or if you develop a fever and chills while pregnant.

Listeria can hide in many foods



Prevention

There is no vaccine to prevent listeriosis. *Listeria* bacteria can be killed by pasteurization and proper cooking procedures. To prevent listeriosis:

- Keep raw meat separate from ready-to-eat foods
- Wash your hands after handling raw meat
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating
- Do not consume unpasteurized milk or juice
- Cook all foods thoroughly
- Keep your refrigerator at $\leq 40^{\circ}$ F
- Keep your freezer at $\leq 0^{\circ}$ F
- Refrigerate perishable food within two hours
- Defrost food in the fridge, cold water, or the microwave- never at room temperature
- High-risk individuals (including pregnant woman) should not consume soft cheeses, unpasteurized milk or juice
- High-risk individuals (including pregnant woman) should heat ready-to-eat meats before eating

For more information

If you need more information, please contact your primary care physician or Gila County Division of Health & Emergency Management at (928) 402-8811.