

## What is listeriosis?

Listeriosis is a serious infection caused by eating food contaminated with the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*.

## How is listeriosis spread?

People usually become ill with listeriosis after eating contaminated food such as improperly processed deli meats, soft cheeses and unpasteurized milk products.

## What are the signs and symptoms of listeriosis?

- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Diarrhea

Symptoms may begin a few days after you've eaten contaminated food, but it may take as long as 30 days or more before the first signs and symptoms of infection begin. If the *listeria* infection spreads to your nervous system, signs and symptoms may include:

- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Confusion or changes in alertness
- Loss of balance
- Convulsions

## Who is most at risk?

Pregnant women and their newborns, adults aged 65 or older, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to get sick from *listeria* infection.

## What type of health problems are caused by listeriosis?

- A generalized blood infection (septicemia)
- Inflammation of the membranes and fluid surrounding the brain (meningitis)
- Premature birth
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Infection in the baby after birth

## How is listeriosis diagnosed?

A blood test or culture is often used to determine whether you have a listeria infection. In some cases, samples of urine or spinal fluid may also be tested.

## How is listeriosis treated?

Treatment varies, depending on the severity of the signs and symptoms. Most people with mild symptoms require no treatment. More-serious infections can be treated with antibiotics.

## How can listeriosis be prevented?

- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling or preparing food.
- After cooking, wash utensils, cutting board and other food preparation surfaces.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Be cautious about eating foods that are more likely to be contaminated if you are at higher risk for infection.

## Where can I get more information?

- [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [Utah Department of Health](https://www.health.utah.gov)

Rev. 05/2018