

# Listeriosis

## What is listeria?

Listeriosis is caused by a type of bacteria called listeria. It's mainly spread through contaminated food and is also widespread throughout the environment and can be found in soil, wood, decaying vegetation and water.

## When did I get it?

Symptoms of listeriosis in most healthy adults are mild. They usually develop from 3-70 days after the initial infection.

## How did I get it?

Listeria is typically spread by contaminated foods; Listeria is an unusual bacterium because it can grow at low temperatures, including refrigeration temperatures of below 5°C. Listeria is most commonly found in unpasteurised milk and dairy products made from unpasteurised milk. Listeria bacteria have been found in a range of chilled "ready-to-eat" foods, including:

- pre-packed sandwiches,
- pâté,
- butter ,
- soft cheeses – such as Brie or Camembert, or others with a similar rind,
- soft blue cheese,
- cooked sliced meats,
- smoked salmon,
- Vegetables can be contaminated if they're grown in contaminated soil or fertiliser, or if they're washed in contaminated water.
- Meat and dairy products can become contaminated if they're taken from infected animals.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms are similar to flu and gastroenteritis, and include:

- a high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F) or above
- muscle ache or pain
- chills
- feeling or being sick
- diarrhoea

These symptoms usually pass within a few days, even without treatment. However, in rare cases, the infection can be more severe and spread to other parts of your body, causing serious complications, such as meningitis. Common signs of severe listeriosis include a stiff neck, severe headache and tremors.

### How do I stop it spreading?

- While you are ill and have symptoms you are infectious. You can return to work or school once you have been free from diarrhoea for 48 hours.
- You should tell your employer you have had listeriosis infection if you work with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the young, those in poor health, or handle food.
- Wash hands thoroughly after going to the toilet and before preparing meals or eating.
- Supervise young children who are infected with hand washing.
- Disinfect all areas in the toilet daily (including door handles, other contact areas).



### How can I prevent contracting listeria?

- Avoid drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk, and foods that have unpasteurized milk in them.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, before preparing and eating food and also after handling raw food.
- Wash knives, countertops, and cutting boards after handling and preparing uncooked foods.
- Rinse raw produce such as fruit, vegetables and salad items thoroughly under running tap water before eating.
- Keep uncooked meats, poultry, and seafood separate from vegetables, fruits, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods.
- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as meat, poultry, or seafood to a safe internal temperature.
- Consume perishable and ready-to-eat foods as soon as possible.
- Persons in higher risk groups should heat hot dogs, cold cuts, and deli meats before eating them.



### Where can I get more advice?

- Your own G.P
- You should inform your place of work or in the case of children, the head teacher of the school to find out if exclusion is necessary and when you can return.
- The investigating officer may be contacted on the number below for further advice if required.

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