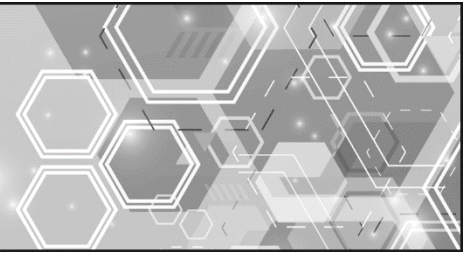




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Listeriosis

What is it?

Listeriosis is a bacterial illness caused by the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. Listeriosis mostly affects older adults, adults with weak immune systems, pregnant women and their unborn children or newborns. However, other people can also get sick with it.

Listeriosis is a disease of public health significance and must be reported to the Health Department.

How is it spread?

Most people get sick after they eat foods that have bacteria. It can be found in many raw foods, such as uncooked meats and vegetables, and in foods that get the bacteria after cooking or processing, such as soft cheeses, processed meats, smoked seafood, hot dogs and packaged deli meat and those sold at deli counters. Unpasteurized (raw) milk and foods made from raw milk, such as cheese can also have it.

Babies can be born with listeriosis if their mothers eat foods that have the bacteria when they are pregnant. Healthy people may eat food that have the bacteria but may not get sick.

Unlike most bacteria, *Listeria* can grow in certain foods in the refrigerator. Foods that have it may not look, smell or taste bad.

What do I look for?

You may start to feel sick within 3-70 days, but usually in about 3 weeks, after the bacteria gets into you. You may have fever, muscle aches, diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, headache, stiff neck, loss of balance and convulsions. If you are pregnant you may only have a mild, flu-like symptoms, but sometimes it can lead to stillbirth, premature delivery, miscarriage or life-threatening infection in your newborn.

How is it treated?

See your health care provider for treatment advice. Antibiotics are usually required for treatment.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How can I protect myself?

If you are at a higher risk, such as being pregnant, have a weak immune system, or are an older adult, you should do the following:

- Do not eat hot dogs, cold cuts, deli meats (e.g., bologna), and fermented or dry sausages unless you heat them to 74°C (165 °F) or higher.
- Avoid getting juices from hot dog and lunch meat packages on your other food, utensils, and surfaces. Make sure you wash your hands well after you touch these items.
- Do not eat soft cheese (such as brie or feta) unless it is pasteurized.
- Do not eat refrigerated pâté or meat spreads from a deli or meat counter. Canned or shelf-stable pâté and meat spreads are safe to eat but refrigerate once you have opened them.
- Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is cooked, canned or shelf-stable. Canned and shelf stable tuna, salmon, and other fish products are safe to eat.
- Check the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#) (CFIA) for food recalls.

Additional food safety precautions:

- Cook all your foods (that comes from animals) and reheat any leftovers to 74°C (165°F) or higher. Eat leftovers and opened pre-packaged foods within a short time.
- Wash all your raw fruits and vegetables under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking.
- Use a thermometer to make sure your refrigerator is kept at 4°C (40°F) or lower.
- Keep any cut melon in your refrigerator, at 4°C (40°F) or lower. Throw out any cut melon if you left it out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Wash your hands well, with warm running water and soap, rubbing together for at least 15 seconds, after using the washroom, changing a diaper, before eating and preparing food.
- Carefully wash and sanitize your knives, countertops, cutting boards and work surfaces.
- Make sure your raw meat and poultry are separate from vegetables, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods.
- Clean up spills in your refrigerator with soap and hot water.

More information can be obtained from

Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

July 10, 2025

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