### Listeria

| Sources | • Unpasteurized (raw) milk and dairy products.  
|         | • Soft cheese made with unpasteurized milk, such as queso fresco, feta, Brie, Camembert.  
|         | • Raw fruits and vegetables (such as sprouts).  
|         | • Ready-to-eat deli meats and hot dogs.  
|         | • Refrigerated pâtés or meat spreads.  
|         | • Refrigerated smoked seafood.  
|         | • Be aware that Hispanic-style cheeses made from pasteurized milk, such as queso fresco, have caused *Listeria* infections, most likely because they were contaminated during cheese-making. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incubation period</th>
<th>7 to 70 days</th>
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| Symptoms | *Listeria* can cause fever and diarrhea similar to other foodborne germs, but this type of *Listeria* infection is rarely diagnosed.  
|          | Symptoms in people with invasive listeriosis, meaning the bacteria has spread beyond the gut, include:  
|          | • For pregnant women: fever, fatigue and muscle aches. Pregnant women may also have no symptoms but experience fetal death, pre-term labor, or infection of the newborn.  
|          | • For all others, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, and convulsions in addition to fever and muscle aches. |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Duration of illness</th>
<th>Days to weeks</th>
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| Who is at risk | • Adults age 65 and older  
|               | • Pregnant women and their newborns  
<p>|               | • People whose immune systems are weakened due to illness or medical treatment |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to do</th>
<th>For invasive listeriosis, antibiotics given promptly can cure the infection. In pregnant women, antibiotics are given to prevent infection in the unborn baby.</th>
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</table>
| Prevention | - Do not drink raw (unpasteurized) milk, and do not eat soft cheeses made with it, such as queso fresco.  
- Heat hot dogs, cold cuts, and deli meats to an internal temperature of 165°F or until steaming hot before eating.  
- Eat cut melon right away or refrigerate it.  
- People at higher risk **should not eat** the following foods:  
  - Refrigerated pâtés or meat spreads from a deli or meat counter or from the refrigerated section of a store  
  - Refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is canned or shelf-stable or it is in a cooked dish, such as a casserole  
  - Raw or lightly cooked sprouts of any kind  
  - Soft cheese, such as queso fresco, queso blanco, panela, brief, Camembert, blue-veined, or feta, unless labeled as made with pasteurized milk  
- People at higher risk should be aware that Hispanic-style cheeses made from pasteurized milk, such as queso fresco, have caused *Listeria* infections, most likely because they were contaminated during cheese-making. |

Date Last Reviewed April 12, 2019