

[Listeria](#)

Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
Incubation period	Usually 1 to 4 weeks, can be as long as 70 days
Symptoms	<p><i>Listeria</i> can cause fever and diarrhea similar to other foodborne germs, but this type of <i>Listeria</i> infection is rarely diagnosed.</p> <p>Symptoms in people with invasive listeriosis, meaning the bacteria has spread beyond the gut, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
Duration of illness	Days to weeks
Who is at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults age 65 and older• Pregnant women and their newborns• People whose immune systems are weakened due to illness or medical treatment
What to do	For invasive listeriosis, antibiotics given promptly can cure the infection. In pregnant women, antibiotics are given to prevent infection in the unborn baby.
Prevention	Recommendations for everyone: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not drink raw (unpasteurized) milk,

and do not eat soft cheeses made with it, such as queso fresco.

- Eat cut melon right away or refrigerate it.

Recommendations for people at higher risk:

- 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
 - Hot dogs, cold cuts, and deli meats, unless they are heated to an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C) or until steaming hot before eating.
 - 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, brie, Camembert, blue-veined, or feta, unless labeled as made with pasteurized milk
- 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. Safer choices, especially for pregnant women, include cream cheese, mozzarella, and hard cheeses.

Date Last Reviewed September 19, 2023