

Listeria



WHAT IS LISTERIA?

“Listeria Monocytogenes” is a bacterium responsible for an estimated 1,600 illnesses each year in the United States. Of the estimated number of cases, approximately 260 of those end in fatality. Listeria food poisoning outbreaks in 2011 and 2012 have been widespread among multiple states arising from widely distributed food sources. Listeria can grow in cold temperatures, and even properly refrigerated foods can become contaminated.



HOW IS LISTERIA CONTRACTED?

Listeria is contracted by eating foods contaminated with the bacteria Listeria Monocytogenes. The bacteria can be killed by pasteurization and proper cooking. Animals can carry the bacteria (found in water and soil) and contaminate foods derived from those animals. Foods such as raw milk, ice cream, soft cheeses, raw meats, cooked poultry, raw and smoked seafood, and processed meats, including hot dogs and deli meats, are common sources for bacterial growth. Raw vegetables may become contaminated by being irrigated with contaminated water or growing in contaminated soil.



RECOVERY AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Symptoms of Listeria food poisoning usually arise twenty-four hours after ingestion and may persist for two days in healthy individuals. Individuals who are prone to infection may have longer lasting and more complicated symptoms. Listeria can be treated with antibiotics, and antibiotic treatment may be required for individuals falling into one of the high-risk groups described below. Some complications are especially hazardous for pregnant women. Pregnant women should be particularly careful to guard themselves against exposure to contaminated foods, as infection can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, and a possible life-threatening development of infection in a newborn.



SYMPTOMS

Listeriosis is a rare but serious illness caused by eating food contaminated with the bacteria called Listeria monocytogenes. Anyone who experiences fever and muscle aches, sometimes preceded by diarrhea or other gastrointestinal symptoms, or develops fever and chills after eating the ice cream should seek medical care and tell their health care provider about any history of eating the ice cream. Symptoms can appear from a few days up to a few weeks after consumption of the contaminated food.



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