

# Parent Food Safety Guide for Listeria



## What is Listeria?

*Listeriosis* is a serious infection caused by eating food contaminated with the bacterium called *Listeria monocytogenes*. *Listeria* is found in soil and water. Vegetables can become contaminated from the soil or from manure used as fertilizer. Animals can carry the bacterium without appearing ill, contaminating their food products such as meat and dairy.

### MARLERCLARK

MARLER CLARK IS THE NATION'S FOREMOST LAW FIRM REPRESENTING VICTIMS OF FOOD POISONING.

This brochure is part of our on-going effort to end the need for Listeria litigation in this country. Until then, you can contact us at [WWW.MARLERCLARK.COM](http://WWW.MARLERCLARK.COM) or by calling 866-770-2032



## How do you get Listeria?

*Listeria* has been found in a variety of raw foods, such as uncooked meats and unpasteurized (raw) milk or foods made from unpasteurized milk. *Listeria* is killed by pasteurization and cooking; however, in certain ready-to-eat foods, like hot dogs and cold cuts from the deli counter, contamination may occur after cooking but before packaging. Pregnant women and immune-compromised individuals are the most at risk for severe illnesses.



## What to look for:

The incubation period (time between ingestion and the onset of symptoms) for *Listeria* ranges from three to 70 days and averages 21 days. A person with listeriosis may develop fever, muscle aches, and sometimes nausea or diarrhea. If infection spreads to the nervous system, symptoms such as headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or convulsions can occur. Infected pregnant woman may only experience a mild, flu-like illness, but infection during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, infection of the newborn or even stillbirth.



## What to do:

A blood or spinal fluid test (to cultivate the bacteria) is required to test for listeriosis. Invasive infections with *Listeria* can be treated with antibiotics. When infection occurs during pregnancy, antibiotics given promptly to the pregnant woman can often prevent infection of the fetus or newborn.



## Prevention:

Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, pork, or poultry. Wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating. Keep uncooked meats separate from vegetables and from cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods. Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk or foods made from it. Consume perishable and ready-to-eat foods as soon as possible. In addition to raw milk products, immunocompromised individuals and pregnant women should avoid soft cheeses, hot dogs, and luncheon and deli meats. For more information visit [www.about-listeria.com](http://www.about-listeria.com).