



# LISTERIA FACT SHEET

## WHAT IS LISTERIA?

Listeriosis is a serious infection usually caused by eating food contaminated with the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. The infection is most likely to sicken pregnant women and their newborns, adults aged 65 or older, and people with weakened immune systems.

## HOW DO YOU GET LISTERIA?

Listeriosis is usually caused by eating contaminated food. If infection occurs during pregnancy, *Listeria* bacteria can spread to the baby through the placenta.

## SYMPTOMS

Pregnant women typically experience only fever and other flu-like symptoms. However, infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or life-threatening infection of the newborn. People other than pregnant women typically have symptoms including; headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, fever, and muscle aches. Symptoms typically appear 1 to 4 weeks after exposure to *Listeria*.

## TREATMENT

Listeriosis is treated with antibiotics. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

## PREVENTION

Only consume pasteurized milk and milk products, including soft cheese, ice cream, and yogurt. Look for the word “pasteurized” on the label.

Safely store food products in the refrigerator.

Cook sprouts thoroughly to reduce your risk for getting sick. Thorough cooking kills the harmful bacteria.

## DGHD EFFORTS

The Delaware General Health District (DGHD) routinely inspects restaurants, grocery stores, and other places where food is sold. In addition, we provide training to food service workers and the public regarding proper food handling practices. Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the DGHD. The DGHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of illness, and engages in community outreach and education.

