

## What is Listeria?

Listeria infection is a rare but potentially serious illness caused by the bacteria known as *Listeria monocytogenes*. A listeria infection can be caused when food containing the bacteria is ingested. In particular food that is raw or undercooked or not properly stored and prepared. Listeria can not be caught from another person, but can be passed onto your unborn baby.

Listeria infection is uncommon but pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are more at risk.

## What are the symptoms of Listeria?

- Fevers and chills
- Headache
- Stiff neck and light sensitivity
- Confusion and sleepiness
- Muscle aches
- Nausea and vomiting

Symptoms can occur for up to 3 weeks after the infection. Healthy people usually have very few symptoms of an infection, but pregnant women may be at risk of miscarriage, premature birth and still birth. Babies born with listeria infection can develop sepsis (an acute and serious infection). Listeria infection usually requires hospitalisation and antibiotic treatment.

## How to reduce the risk of listeria infection

- Wash your hands before preparing food or eating
- Throw out leftovers that are left unrefrigerated
- Defrost food in the fridge not on the bench
- Wash fruit and vegetables
- Keep cooked and raw foods separate in the fridge
- Cook foods thoroughly
- Try and avoid reheating food
- Keep your fridge at 5° C
- Avoid cold deli meats and salads

## High risk foods include but are not limited to:

- Pate
- Precooked BBQ chicken
- Soft cheeses eg: camembert, brie, ricotta
- Prepacked salads
- Ready-to-eat cold, raw or smoked seafood
- Sushi
- Soft serve ice cream
- Tofu
- Unpasteurised milk products



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