Listeriosis is a food-borne illness caused by bacteria called *Listeria*. Infected animals can spread these bacteria in their milk and cheese, and to the soil. This can infect animals, vegetables, and other foods that contact soil and animal manure.

### Listerosis

#### How is listeriosis spread?

Listeriosis is spread by eating food or drinking fluids contaminated with these bacteria. Anyone can get listeriosis, but you are at a higher risk if you:

- Are pregnant.
  - Pregnant women get listeriosis about 13 times more often than other healthy adults.
  - Newborn babies are at risk for more serious illness if infected.
- Are an adult over age 50.
- Have a weakened immune system, caused by:
  - AIDS.
  - Cancer.
  - Diabetes.
  - Kidney disease.
  - Medicines for organ transplants and other serious medical conditions.

#### What are signs of listeriosis?

You may have no signs. Or, you may have flu-like signs such as:

- Fever.
- Chills.
- Muscle aches.
- Diarrhea.
- Upset stomach.
If the illness gets worse, you can have:
- Headaches.
- Stiff neck.
- Confusion.
- Loss of balance.
- Convulsions.

How do you know if you have listeriosis?
The only way to know if you have listeriosis is by a medical exam. Your health care provider can examine and test for it. Lab samples may be taken from amniotic fluid, blood, feces, and urine.

How is listeriosis treated?
Listeriosis can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Always finish antibiotic treatment.

What can happen to pregnant women if they are not treated for listeriosis?
LISTERIOSIS can be very serious for the pregnant woman and for her child. Listeria bacteria can pass from a pregnant woman to her unborn child. Listeriosis can cause:
- Miscarriage.
- Early birth.
- Birth of an infected baby.
- Brain damage or other problems in the baby.
- Death of both the mother and the baby.

How can you avoid listeriosis?
- Learn how to handle food safely. This can reduce your risk of listeriosis and other food-borne illness for you and your family.
- Avoid non-pasteurized soft cheeses.
- Cook food thoroughly.

For more on listeriosis see:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
Listeriosis (Listeria infection)
www.cdc.gov/listeria/index.html
Listeriosis (Listeria) and Pregnancy
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/infections-listeria.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office on Women’s Health:
Food Don’ts; Print-and-Go Guide

U.S. National Library of Medicine:
Listeriosis

Pregnant women should avoid eating soft cheeses, deli meats, and cold salads from salad bars.