



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

NEWS RELEASE

Office of Communications
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

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State Health Department warns of Listeria outbreak

DENVER – Officials at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment today announced the state health department has identified a sharp increase in the number of *Listeria monocytogenes* infections reported to public health agencies.

Nine cases were reported during August, with seven of the nine cases reported since August 29. In comparison, during 2000-2010, an average of two cases were reported during August. On average, Colorado has only about 10 cases of listeriosis a year.

Individuals in all nine cases were hospitalized and two died. The affected individuals reside in the following counties: Adams, Arapahoe (2), Boulder, Denver, Douglas, El Paso, Jefferson and Weld. They range in age from the 30s to the 90s. The majority are older female adults.

This investigation is in its early stages, and the source of the outbreak is not known. Alicia Cronquist, an epidemiologist at the state health department said, “Until we have more information about the sources of this outbreak, it is important for people to follow the standard CDC guidance about Listeria.”

Cronquist said, “People who are at high risk for Listeria infection can decrease their risk by avoiding hot dogs and deli meats unless reheated to an internal temperature of 165 F; refrigerated pâté or meat spreads; refrigerated smoked seafood; and soft cheeses such as queso fresco and brie unless they are made with pasteurized milk.”

People who are at high risk for Listeria include people with weakened immune systems from transplants or certain chronic diseases, immunosuppressive therapies or medications; pregnant women; and people age 60 and older.

Consumption of food contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* can cause listeriosis, an uncommon but potentially fatal infection. Healthy people rarely contract listeriosis. Symptoms

of listeriosis can include fever and muscle aches, and can also include diarrhea, headache, stiff neck, confusion and convulsions. Listeriosis also can cause miscarriages and stillbirths.

Antibiotics given promptly can cure the illness and prevent infection of a fetus. Even with prompt treatment, some *Listeria* infections result in death. This is particularly likely in older adults and in people with other serious medical problems.

Specific recommendations for people at high risk for *Listeria* infection:

Meats

- Do not eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, cold cuts, other deli meats (e.g., bologna), or fermented or dry sausages unless they are heated to an internal temperature of 165 F, or until steaming hot just before serving.
- Avoid getting fluid from hot dog and lunch meat packages on other foods, utensils and food preparation surfaces, and wash hands after handling hot dogs, luncheon meats and deli meats.
- Do not eat refrigerated pâté or meat spreads from a deli or meat counter or from the refrigerated section of a store. Foods that do not need refrigeration, such as canned or shelf-stable pâté and meat spreads, are safe to eat. Refrigerate after opening.



Seafood

- Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is contained in a cooked dish, such as a casserole, or unless it is a canned or shelf-stable product. Refrigerated smoked seafood, such as salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna and mackerel, is most often labeled as "nova-style," "lox," "kippered," "smoked" or "jerky." These fish typically are found in the refrigerator section or deli counters of grocery stores and delicatessens. Canned and shelf-stable tuna, salmon and other fish products are safe to eat.

Cheeses

- Do not eat soft cheese such as feta, queso blanco, queso fresco, brie, Camembert, blue-veined or panela (queso panela) unless it is labeled as made with pasteurized milk. Make sure the label says, "made with pasteurized milk."

General recommendations from CDC:

- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, pork or poultry, to a safe internal temperature. For a list of recommended temperatures for meat and poultry, visit http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/IsItDoneYet_Magnet.pdf.  
- Rinse raw vegetables thoroughly under running tap water before eating.
- Keep uncooked meats and poultry separate from vegetables, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods.
- Do not drink raw (unpasteurized) milk, and do not eat foods that have unpasteurized milk in them.
- Wash hands, knives, countertops and cutting boards after handling and preparing uncooked foods.

For more information, visit the CDC website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/listeriosis/>