



Dr. Escott's Medical Minute Listeria Infections

If you are a Blue Bell ice cream fanatic, or have been simply following the evening news, you may have heard about the widespread recall on all Blue Bell ice cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet, and frozen snacks due to potential bacteria contamination. So, what is this bacteria that's responsible for three deaths and 10 hospitalizations across several states? It is called *Listeria monocitogenes* and it causes Listeriosis in humans. Listeriosis is a potentially life-threatening infection caused by eating food contaminated with the bacteria. Although people can sometimes develop listeriosis up to 2 months after eating contaminated food, symptoms usually start within several days and can mimic many other infections.

SYMPTOMS:

- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Diarrhea
- Joint pain
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Other gastrointestinal symptoms

HIGH RISK GROUPS:

- Pregnant Women and their baby
- Adults 65 and older
- People with weakened immune systems and chronic diseases

PREGNANT WOMEN:

Pregnant Women should follow their doctor's orders and take extra precaution as they are 20 times more likely to become infected than non-pregnant healthy adults. Approximately one-third of all listeriosis cases happen during pregnancy. Risks during pregnancy include:

- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Uterine infections
- Premature labor
- Death of newborn



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Montgomery County
Public Health District

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SOURCES AND PREVENTION OF LISTERIA INFECTIONS:

Listeria can find its way into all types of foods and is a bacteria that can grow in refrigerators.

People at high risk, particularly **PREGNANT WOMEN**, should not eat refrigerated food unless it can be thoroughly heated or washed. This includes:

- Refrigerated salads
- Dips and spreads
- Cheeses, particularly soft cheeses
- Bean sprouts
- Deli meats
- Sliced vegetables which can't be re-washed.

General recommendations to prevent infection are as follows:

- Properly clean and dry raw produce
- Keep raw meats and poultry away from cooked and ready-to-eat foods
- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly
- Keep kitchen and utensils clean
- Keep your kitchen and environment cleaner and safer
- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly

TREATMENT AND ADVICE:

Listeriosis is treated with antibiotics. If a person has eaten food contaminated with the *Listeria* bacteria and does not have any symptoms, most experts believe that no tests or treatment are needed, even for people at higher risk for listeriosis.

If you have any Blue Bell products in your home, throw them out or return them to the store. It is better to be safe than sick. If you are experiencing fever, muscle aches, and/or diarrhea or other gastrointestinal issues after eating any Blue Bell product, please see your doctor. For more information on *Listeria* and how you can prevent it, visit www.cdc.gov/listeria.