

Listeriosis and Pregnancy



What is a listeria infection?

Listeria monocytogenes is a bacterium commonly found in nature (e.g. soil, water) and in some foods. You can get a listeria infection (listeriosis) from eating contaminated foods. Although listeriosis is uncommon in Hong Kong and causes few or no symptoms in healthy people, it can be very dangerous for pregnant women. Infected pregnant women may transmit the listeria bacteria to their fetus, thus leading to miscarriage, still birth, premature birth or serious illnesses in a newborn baby.

What are the symptoms and what should you do?

In listeriosis, pregnant women may show flu-like symptoms, chills, fever, headache, back pain and sore throat. You should consult doctor immediately if you have the above symptoms during pregnancy. However, some may be asymptomatic.



How can you reduce the risk of listeriosis?

For the sake of your health and that of your baby during pregnancy, you should take the following precautions while selecting a balanced and nutritious diet from a wide variety of foods:

1 Avoiding high-risk foods potentially containing listeria

Foods that could contain listeria are mostly chilled ready-to-eat foods and refrigerated foods. They include:



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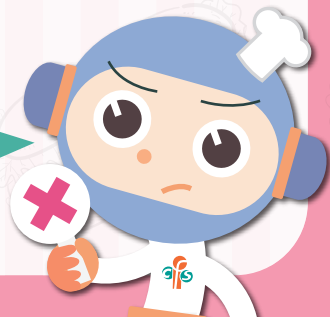


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- 1 soft cheeses
- 2 cold meats
- 3 pates
- 4 prepared & stored salads
- 5 smoked seafoods
- 6 prepackaged refrigerated foods that has passed its shelf life
- 7 takeaway cooked diced chickens
- 8 raw seafoods
- 9 unpasteurised milk and those products made from it

Foods or drinks sold by illegal hawkers are also unsafe for eating.

*Please also see the guide to foods on back page



2 Make sure the food is fresh

Listeria can be destroyed easily by conventional cooking. However, it is one of the few bacteria that can grow in low temperature. Therefore, freshly cooked foods are safe to eat, but chilled ready-to-eat foods and refrigerated foods should be avoided.

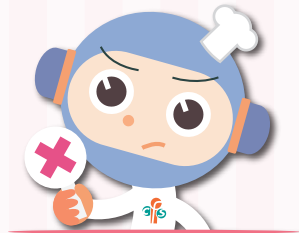


3 Make sure the food is really hot

If you buy ready-to-eat hot foods, make sure they are served steaming hot. When reheating food at home, make sure it is steaming hot throughout.

4 Be careful while eating out

Only eat foods that are served hot and avoid those that are served lukewarm. It is best to avoid any buffet-type meal. If this is not possible, choose hot dishes only and avoid pre-prepared salads (such as those in salad bars).









5 Practise good food and personal hygiene

Follow simple food and personal hygiene measures below to reduce the risk of foodborne diseases:

- Thaw ready-to-eat frozen foods in the refrigerator. Do not thaw at room temperature
- Keep raw meats covered and separated from cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods
- Store raw meats below other foods in the refrigerator
- Wash hands, knives and cutting boards after handling raw foods
- Use separate cutting boards for raw and cooked foods
- Cook all raw foods of animal origin thoroughly and reheat food and leftover until steaming hot
- Cool down cooked hot food kept in a container with ice cube pans or cold water, and store it in the refrigerator after the steam has gone quickly



A guide to foods which are safe and those at 'higher risk' of listeria contaminated

| Food types | Safe or Avoid | Precautions |
|--|-----------------|--|
|  Cheese | | |
| Soft cheese | Avoid ⚠️ | |
| Spread and processed cheese | Safe | Ensure packaging is intact and store in refrigerator |
| Hard Cheese | Safe | Store in refrigerator |
|  Cold Meats | | |
| Ready -to-eat (from super-markets, sandwich bars etc.) | Avoid ⚠️ | |
| Home-made | Safe | Use immediately or store in refrigerator and use within 12 hours |
|  Chicken | | |
| Home-made | Safe | Use immediately or store in refrigerator and use within 12 hours |
| Hot take-away chicken | Safe | Make sure it is steaming hot when you buy it and use immediately |
| Ready-to-eat, cold (whole or sliced) | Avoid ⚠️ | |
|  Pate | | |
| Ready-to-eat (packaged or loose) | Avoid ⚠️ | |
|  Salad | | |
| Ready-to-eat (from salad bars, packaged etc.) | Avoid ⚠️ | |
| Home-made | Safe | Wash all vegetables thoroughly. When prepared, store in refrigerator and use within 12 hours |
|  Seafood | | |
| Raw (e.g. oyster, sashimi or sushi) | Avoid ⚠️ | |
| Smoked (chilled or frozen) | Avoid ⚠️ | |

