

Laboratory results from Health Canada confirm a link between meat products recalled by Maple Leaf Foods from their plant in Toronto and an outbreak of the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. As of August 27<sup>th</sup> 2008, 15 deaths in Canada have been linked to listeriosis; 12 were from Ontario, with one each in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Quebec. Health officials are now reporting an additional 29 confirmed cases of listeriosis.

### **WHAT IS LISTERIOSIS?**

*Listeria monocytogenes* (commonly called *Listeria*) is a type of bacteria often found in food and elsewhere in nature. It can cause a rare and potentially serious disease called listeriosis. Many people may be exposed to *Listeria*, but few will actually develop listeriosis symptoms. Those at greatest risk include:

- the elderly
- pregnant women
- newborns
- those with weakened immune systems

### **SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR...**

Symptoms may start within a day of eating contaminated food, or may occur weeks later. The initial symptoms often include:

- high, persistent fever
- severe headache
- diarrhea
- vomiting, nausea
- muscle pain

Other associated symptoms to watch for include: stiff neck, loss of balance or confusion. If pregnant, the symptoms often resemble the flu.

## PRODUCTS OF CONCERN....

This current outbreak is associated with products from the Maple Leaf plant in Toronto. Public health officials have warned that food contaminated with *Listeria* may not look or smell like it has spoiled. The affected products include:

- 24 deli meat sandwich varieties
- 28 varieties of Safeway and TakeAwayCafe brand sandwiches at Safeway and Mac's Convenience Stores

**For more information on products of concern please visit the following link:**

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/recarapp/2008/list97be.shtml>

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF...

The risk of contracting listeriosis depends on two factors: 1) individual susceptibility and 2) exposure to the bacteria. There are steps that can be taken to decrease your susceptibility, even after you have consumed food that may have been contaminated. These steps include:

1. Follow a healthy, preventive lifestyle by:
  - Eating a "clean diet" that consist primarily of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains
  - Eating moderate amounts of protein including legumes, nuts and seeds
  - Avoiding the following: sugar, fruit juices, caffeine, alcohol, and processed and fried food
  - Drinking at least six to eight glasses of water per day
  - Ensuring you get eight hours of sleep each night
  - Practicing deep breathing exercises 10 minutes per day
  - Focusing on positive mental outlook and positive thinking
  - Engaging in 1/2 hour of exercise per day
  - Following proper dietary hygiene steps, as outlined below
2. If you are concerned about your immune status or health risks, work with a naturopathic doctor to receive advice on what treatment strategy is best for disease prevention and the treatment of symptoms.

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**WE ALSO RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING...**

Read and follow all package labels and instructions on food preparation and storage

- After handling foods in the kitchen, especially raw foods such as meat and fish, thoroughly clean and sanitize all surfaces used for food
- To avoid cross-contamination, clean all knives, cutting boards and utensils used for raw food before using them again
- Thoroughly clean fruits and vegetables before you eat them
- Heat foods such as hot dogs and deli meats to the point of steaming hot, prior to eating them
- Refrigerate or freeze perishable food, prepared food and leftovers within two hours
- Defrost food in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave, but never at room temperature
- Keep leftovers for a maximum of four days only and reheat them to an internal temperature of 74°C (165°F) before eating them
- Frequently wash and disinfect the refrigerator. The more often it is cleaned, the less chance there will be for *Listeria* to be transferred from contaminated food and surfaces to non-contaminated foods

*For more information on listeriosis, symptoms, treatment and precautionary measures, please visit the HEALTH CANADA website at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca).*

**For a referral to a naturopathic doctor in your area or for more information on naturopathic medicine contact:**

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