



**- Please immediately bring to the attention of all doctors -**

Date: 12 December 2005

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### ***Listeria* Infections**

The Department of Health is investigating a cluster of four cases of listeriosis, which has involved two deaths. Three of the four cases reported so far have been in people with underlying health problems who have been hospitalised during the incubation period. Microbiological analysis has indicated that all cases are *Listeria monocytogenes* 01, but molecular typing has shown that not all strains were identical.

*Listeria* infection is most serious in the immunocompromised and the elderly, in whom it tends to cause bacteraemia and/or meningitis, and in pregnant women, when it may result in abortion, stillbirth, neonatal sepsis, and neonatal meningitis. Infection usually occurs through consumption of contaminated foods, although there is also risk from contact with infected farm animals. The incubation period is from 3 to 70 days, and averages 3 weeks.

As the vast majority of infections are food-borne, it is recommended that vulnerable patients are reminded to avoid high-risk foods. As *Listeria* can multiply at 4°C, these foods tend to be those kept in refrigerators for extended periods, and include:

- Unpasteurised dairy products
- Soft cheeses, e.g. brie, camembert, feta, blue vein cheese
- Unwashed raw vegetables
- Raw and smoked fish, sashimi, sushi, oysters
- Delicatessen-line cold meats such as pate, sliced ham, corned beef
- Pre-cut fruit
- Pre-packaged salads, salad bar items
- Pre-cooked chicken
- Soft-serve ice creams.

People in the risk groups should be discouraged from eating these sorts of food.

A fact sheet for members of the public may be downloaded from this website:  
[http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/\\_srcfiles/Listeria.pdf](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/_srcfiles/Listeria.pdf)

Please contact the Communicable Disease Control Branch on 08 8226 7177 if you require further information.

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