



Public Health
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Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

Health Advisory

Please deliver a copy of the accompanying alert to each provider in your organization.

Thank you

Questions regarding this alert may be directed to the office of:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Officer

Clark County Public Health
Cowlitz County Health Department
Skamania County Health Department
Wahkiakum County Department of Health and Human Services
(360) 397-8412

Please Distribute

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for specific incident for situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.



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HEALTH ADVISORY

April 4, 2011

TO: Health care providers, health care facilities, veterinarians, clinical laboratories
FROM: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH, Health Officer
Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH, Deputy Health Officer
RE: Listeria Contamination In Local Delicatessen

Environmental sampling recently identified *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination in utensils used in a Longview retail delicatessen. The deli has removed any contaminated utensils and any possibly contaminated food from sale.

Although consuming *Listeria*-contaminated food can cause Listeriosis, the dosage of organisms necessary to cause illness is high. Therefore, we believe the risk to those who have already consumed product from this deli is very low. However, given that pregnant women, the elderly and people with immune deficiency could be at risk for infection, and given that timely antibiotic treatment can reduce the risk of complications from Listeriosis, we are issuing this advisory to provide information on the diagnostic criteria and specimen submission.

Epidemiology of Listeriosis in Washington State:

Although *L. monocytogenes* is common in the environment, Listeriosis is uncommon. The number of cases reported each year in Washington ranges from 12 to 25. The organism is easily recoverable from soil, water, sewage, vegetation, silage, commercial meat, and dairy products. Domestic and wild mammals, birds, and humans may be asymptomatic carriers of *Listeria* in their intestinal flora. Up to 5% of humans may be excreting *L. monocytogenes* in their stools at any given time, although person-to-person transmission is rare.

Clinical Criteria for Diagnosis:

The presentation of Listeriosis depends on the host. Immunocompromised and elderly persons usually present with sepsis and meningitis. Immunocompetent persons may experience an acute febrile gastroenteritis. Infection during pregnancy may present as a flu-like illness (i.e., fever headache and muscle aches) and may result in fetal loss through miscarriage or stillbirth, or neonatal meningitis or bacteremia. Treatment with antibiotics for infections diagnosed during pregnancy may prevent complications. Healthcare providers should consider appropriate infectious disease consultation for treatment recommendations.

Laboratory Criteria for Diagnosis:

1. Isolation of *L. monocytogenes* from a normally sterile site (e.g., blood or cerebrospinal fluid [CSF] or, less commonly, joint, pleural, or pericardial fluid)
2. In the setting of miscarriage or stillbirth, isolation of *L. monocytogenes* from placental or fetal tissue

Submitting Specimens:

Laboratories in Washington are required to submit *Listeria* isolates to the Washington Public Health Laboratory (PHL). Note that PHL requires all clinical specimens have two patient identifiers, a name **and** a second identifier (e.g., date of birth) both on the specimen label and on the submission form. Due to laboratory accreditation standards, specimens will be rejected for testing if not properly identified. Also include specimen source and collection date.

Isolates should be submitted to PHL on media that support its growth. Listeriosis is a notifiable condition. If you are considering submitting a specimen for *Listeria*, please contact the appropriate health department at the number below. The health department will work with the Washington Department of Health to provide assistance in determining which specimens should be collected for laboratory study. .

Reporting Suspect Cases:

To report notifiable conditions, submit specimens or if you have questions, please call:

- Clark County Public Health: (360) 397-8182.
- Cowlitz County Health Department: (360) 414-5599
- Skamania County Community Health: (509) 427-3850

Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services (360) 795-6207