

## ***Listeria monocytogenes***

*Listeria monocytogenes* is a risk group 2 bacterium affecting humans and animals. It is considered a **reproductive pathogen** as it has caused fetal death, spontaneous abortion, premature delivery, and newborn death. *L. monocytogenes* can be transmitted transplacentally from mother to child and via the birth canal during birth.

### **How can I be exposed to *L. monocytogenes*?**

- Transmission occurs via consumption of fresh and processed meats, raw milk, or cheese, exposure to contaminated soil, water, vegetables, manure, or slaughterhouse waste among other routes.
- Vertical transmission may occur during pregnancy.
- Laboratory workers may be exposed by naturally and experimentally infected animals.

### **How can I protect myself from exposure?**

- Avoid direct skin contact with infected materials or animals by wearing personal protective equipment.
- Avoid splashes to the mucous membranes by wearing appropriate safety goggles or face shield, and mask covering the nose and mouth.
- Avoid respiratory exposure by using a biosafety cabinet\ or other primary containment device. Refer to the protocol risk assessment for use of a respirator.

### **What should I do if I think I've been exposed to *L. monocytogenes*?**

Wash the affected area immediately for 15 minutes with soap and water and seek medical attention.

### **What symptoms should I look for after a potential exposure?**

Symptoms may begin as a mild febrile illness. In pregnancy, symptoms may include fever, chills, malaise, arthralgia, back pain, and diarrhea. Other manifestations include meningitis and febrile gastroenteritis.

### **How long does it take for symptoms to develop?**

The incubation period for *L. monocytogenes* is variable ranging from 1-4 weeks to as long as 2-3 months.

### **Is there a treatment or vaccine?**

Certain antibiotics are effective against *L. monocytogenes*. The recommended course is 2-4 weeks with an additional 2 weeks of treatment for immunocompromised (including pregnant) individuals.

No vaccine is currently available.

### **Can I transmit it to other people?**

*Listeria* is rarely transmitted person to person with the exception of vertical transmission to a fetus.

### **Can I transmit it to my pets?**

Asymptomatic carriers can transmit *Listeria* to animals although it is more likely that they are infected through contaminated raw pet food or environmental sources (soil, manure).

### **Can it survive on surfaces?**

*L. monocytogenes* can survive in soil, water, fecal matter, and animal feed for more than 1 year.

See *Pathogen Safety Data Sheet for More Information*

