

Paranormal “U”**Listeria****Safety Series**

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Listeria is a severe form of food poisoning contracted by eating tainted food. Senior citizens, children, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems are at the highest risk of contracting the disease. Unlike other forms of food poisoning, Listeria can get into your blood and cause septic shock and meningitis. If you contract Listeria you will need to see a medical professional.

Symptoms of Listeria include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, fever, bloated feeling, and inflammation of the intestines. Other symptoms can include headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance and convulsions. These symptoms usually appear within 24 to 48 hours of consuming the tainted food. The first complication of Listeria is usually dehydration, due to fluid loss.

Listeria is commonly found in soil and water. Animals that eat grass can also be contaminated. The most common source is uncooked meat and vegetables, unpasteurized milk and cheeses and other products made from unpasteurized milk. It can also be found in cooked or processed foods like soft cheeses, lunch meat, and smoked seafood. Unlike most bacteria listeria can grow and reproduce in some foods in the refrigerator.

To prevent Listeria wash all produce and separate uncooked meat and vegetables. Keep lunch meat and cooked foods away from uncooked meats and vegetables. To keep your kitchen safe wash your hands and tools after preparing uncooked foods, particularly poultry. **NEVER EVER** use the same knife to cut raw meat and slice your vegetables. Clean up all spills in your refrigerator especially from hot dogs and lunch meats, raw meat and raw poultry. In our case as paranormal investigators be careful about how you bring and store your food on investigations. Use a cooler with ice and place all foods in their own individual zip loc bag. Also always carry hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes to clean surfaces.

If you are unfortunate as I was, and contract this illness this is what you can expect from treatment. If you require medical intervention you can expect a broad-spectrum antibiotic along with fluids to stay hydrated. You will also be put on a bland diet, not that you will ever want to eat again, and rest. If you don't require intervention no tests or treatment are needed. You can however expect to feel very sick for at least 24 hours.

Even with prompt treatment patients with serious medical problems can die. Most patients recover with no lasting complications. Due to the severity of the disease, the health department requires any cases, even just one, to be reported.

It is common to hear about large outbreaks associated with large companies involving food recalls. In my case, the outbreak was linked to a caterer who cut raw chicken and vegetables with the same knife and cutting board. This breach in sanitation resulted in an outbreak at a family gathering which caused severe sickness for all those involved. Check caterer's and any food preparer's records for any citations in food preparation safety.