Listeria Summit: Risk Communication

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Risk Communication

Education of the public about how they can protect themselves from foodborne illness is an important risk management strategy.

People want to play an active role in decisions affecting their lives. Public participation in policy development is critical.
Listeriosis Education

- Listeriosis education began in 1980’s.
- Messages must be tailored to audience
- Resources must be allocated to yield the greatest benefit.
- Messages and communication strategies must be updated as new information emerges, and as new communication tools become available.

FSIS, USDA
Listeriosis Education -- Brochure

“Listeriosis and Food Safety Tips”
- Brochure in English and Spanish
- Over 200,000 produced
- Distributed to Educators
- Distributed to Health Community
- On the FSIS Web site

FSIS, USDA
Listeriosis Education -- Media Outreach

- NAPS Article in 2000
- Video news releases
- Targeted outreach

“At-Risk” People Should Take Extra Care To Prevent Illness From Listeria

(NAPSA)--Consumers who are “at-risk” of illness from foodborne bacteria called Listeria monocytogenes are urged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to take extra care when eating ready-to-eat foods such as luncheon meats, hot dogs, cold cuts, fermented or dry sausage, and other deli-style meat and poultry.

USDA recommends these foods should be reheated until steaming hot. If you cannot reheat them, don’t eat them.

Who are considered “at-risk”? Pregnant women, newborns, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems caused by AIDS, diabetes, kidney disease and certain cancer treatments.

Listeria monocytogenes is a kind of bacteria often found in soil and water, which can cause serious illness. Illness from eating foods with this bacteria is called listeriosis.

To help reduce risks of illness, all consumers should follow four basic food safety rules: (1) wash hands and surfaces often with hot soapy water; (2) don’t cross-contaminate foods with raw meat, poul-

FSIS, USDA
Print Article for Pregnant Women, 2002

Distributed in English and Spanish
Potential to reach over 35 million readers

Listeriosis and Pregnancy: What Is Your Risk?

(NAPS)—When eating for two, you need to pay close attention to food safety, as well as nutrition. Food can contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness.

One type of bacteria found in the environment, Listeria monocytogenes, can cause a foodborne illness called listeriosis. CDC estimates about 2,500 people become ill from listeriosis each year and that 1 in 5 die from the disease. Pregnant women are about 20 times more likely than other healthy adults to become infected.

Here are answers to some questions about listeriosis and pregnancy from USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Q: Why is listeriosis dangerous for me and my child?
A: Hormonal changes during pregnancy have an effect on the mother’s immune system that lead to an increased susceptibility to listeriosis in the mother. It can be transmitted to the fetus through the placenta even if the mother is not showing signs of illness. Listeriosis can lead to premature delivery, miscarriage, stillbirth, or serious health problems for your newborn.

Q: What are the symptoms?
A: Symptoms can take a few days or even weeks to appear and can be mild, so you may not even know you have it. In pregnant women, listeriosis may cause flu-like symptoms with the sudden onset of fever, chills, muscle aches, and sometimes diarrhea or upset stomach. If the infection spreads to the nervous system, symptoms may include headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or convulsions. If you have these symptoms, see your doctor. A blood test can determine if you have listeriosis.

Q: How can I prevent listeriosis?
A: Do not eat hot dogs, lunchmeats, deli meats, or deli meats unless they are reheated until steaming hot. Do not eat soft cheeses, such as feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined cheese, and Mexican-style cheeses or refrigerated pâté and meat spreads. Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood including salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, andsockeye unless it is an ingredient in a cooked dish. Do not drink unpasteurized milk or beer.

Use all perishable items that are precooked and ready-to-eat as soon as possible. Clean your refrigerator regularly and make sure it always stays at 40°F or below. When preparing meals, wash hands and surfaces often, don’t allow cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods; cook to proper temperature; and refrigerate or freeze promptly.

For a copy of the fact sheet “Listeriosis and Pregnancy: What Is Your Risk?” e-mail your request to info.outreach@fsis.usda.gov. For more food safety information, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555; for the hearing impaired 1-800-255-7072 (TTY); www.fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS, USDA
Outreach to Educators

- Presentations and Conference Exhibits
- Electronic Mail Lists
Outreach by Other Agencies

- Food and Nutrition Service
  - Placement in WIC offices, school nurses
- Cooperative State Extension and Education Service
  - State Program Leaders and County Educators
FSIS Web site

- Specific *Listeria* Page on the Web site
- Brochures in full text on the site
- Outreach efforts encourage links to page
Other National Initiatives
Support At-Risk Messages

- Healthy People 2010
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2000

FSIS, USDA
Education Package for Seniors

- Video and Brochure
- Distribution to Senior Centers and Educators

FSIS, USDA
Physicians Primer includes information on Lm
Listeria Facts for Pregnant Women

- Tear-pads of 25 sheets for doctor’s offices
- Over 220,000 pads distributed to date
Continuing Outreach Activities

- Aggressive Outreach to Medical Community
- Aggressive Outreach to Targeted Media
- Continue to work with FNS to Reach Food Program Participants
- Developing a low-literacy brochure
- Targeting Hispanic communities
- Exploring creation of materials in other languages

FSIS, USDA
Public Participation in Policy Decisions

- Public should have the opportunity to provide input into policy decision-making process.
- Helps to ensure that policies have public support.
- Public meetings
Public Participation in Policy Decisions

- Risk communication function will have greater focus in FSIS.
- Need an organized framework for risk communication.
- More fully integrate risk communication into the risk analysis framework.

FSIS, USDA