



Health and Healthy Living
Public Health Division
Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health
4004 – 300 Carlton Street
Winnipeg Manitoba R3B 3M9
T 788-6666 F 948-2204

Santé et Vie saine
Division de la santé publique
4004 - 300, rue Carlton
Winnipeg Manitoba R3B 3M9

August 22, 2008

Dear Colleague

- National outbreak of listeriosis and Canada-wide recall of ready-to-eat foods
- Potential for increased numbers of listeriosis cases in Manitoba
- Encouragement for increased index of suspicion for listeriosis, especially for meningitis or other serious infection in at-risk individuals

Re: Alert concerning Listeria monocytogenes

On August 19, 2008 the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Maple Leaf Consumer Foods issued a product recall and warned the public not to serve or consume certain ready-to-eat deli meat products as these products may be contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes, a gram positive bacterium.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is currently collaborating with provincial health authorities to investigate the increased incidence of listeriosis in the country. To date there have been 17 individuals diagnosed with this outbreak strain of Listeriosis in four provinces; five deaths have been attributed to this strain of listeriosis. More cases are under investigation. All confirmed cases to date are residents of long-term care facilities or were hospitalized during their likely exposure period. There have been no cases in Manitoba associated with this outbreak.

This letter is to encourage physicians to consider Listeriosis as part of the differential diagnosis when encountering any clinical cases of meningitis or severe sepsis, especially in those at higher risk. Barring any contraindications, penicillin or ampicillin in combination with an aminoglycoside would be the most appropriate empiric antibiotics of choice for suspected cases. Consultation with an Infectious Disease specialist is recommended. Cases should be reported to Public Health (788-8666.)

Manifestations are host-dependent. In elderly and immunocompromised persons, sepsis and meningitis are the main presentations. Pregnant women may experience a mild, flu-like illness followed by fetal loss or bacteremia and meningitis in their newborns. Immunocompetent persons may experience acute febrile gastroenteritis.

Transmission is primarily via contaminated food. Rare cases of nosocomial transmission have been reported.

If there is evidence of increased incidence of this disease in Manitoba, the office of the CMOH will be issuing further communications. Below are links to additional information available on Listeria and the Canadian outbreak.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/listeriosis.pdf>
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/2008/listeria080820-eng.php>
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/recarapp/2008/20080819e.shtml>
http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease_listing/listeriosis_gi.html

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

"Original signed by Joel Kettner"

Joel Kettner MD FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

Manitoba
spirited energy
vibrant d'énergie