

August 25, 2008

Suite 300 – 10216 – 124 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada T5N 4A3

Office: (780) 413-7900  
Unit: (780) 413-7600

Dear Colleague,

An increased incidence of *Listeria monocytogenes* has occurred in Canada related to ready-to-eat deli meat products produced by Maple Leaf Consumer Foods. The majority of cases linked to these products have been identified in Ontario. A wide recall of these Maple Leaf products has been undertaken.

*Listeria monocytogenes* is a gram positive bacillus that is commonly found in the environment (soil, forage, silage, water). The most common exposure in humans is through non-pasteurized milk and cheeses and ready-to-eat meats. The risk of illness from *Listeria* is higher in the elderly, newborns, pregnant women and immune compromised individuals. *Listeria* has an incubation period of 3-70 days following exposure, with an average of 21 days.

In pregnant women symptoms often include fever, malaise, headache, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. *Listeria* can be transmitted to the fetus and may result in abortions or stillbirths. In infected infants *Listeria* may present as prematurity, pneumonia or septicemia. In other high-risk individuals the milder symptoms may precede invasive disease manifestations including meningitis, encephalitis, brain abscess or endocarditis.

Testing for *Listeria monocytogenes* may be considered in pregnant women with fever and other symptoms. The protocol for investigation of a stillborn infant includes C&S of the cord and placenta. Testing in other individuals may be considered in the situation of invasive disease such as septicemia, meningitis or encephalitis.

To investigate for *Listeria*, the following specimens may be sent to the Provincial Laboratory or other diagnostic laboratory:

SPECIMEN	TRANSPORT	SPECIFY ON REQUISITION
CSF	Sterile Container	Routine culture, microscopy
Blood	Blood Culture Vial	Routine culture

Stool specimens are **not** recommended. Food specimens will not be tested at this time.

Further information about the food recall can be found on the CFIA website (<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/>).

If you suspect *Listeria* infection in a patient, let us know by calling 780-413-7600 during office hours or 780-433-3940 after hours and weekends.

Sincerely,



G. Predy, MD, FRCPC  
Vice President, Public Health  
Medical Officer of Health