

## **Protecting Yourself Against *Listeria monocytogenes* Pathogen**

*L. monocytogenes* is known as an important foodborne pathogen causing listeriosis, flu-like symptoms causing meningitis, potentially fatal disease in humans as well as in birds and animals. The most susceptible individuals are elderly people, low immune-system individuals, pregnant women and infants.

*L. monocytogenes* can survive in soil, heat, freezing and refrigerator temperatures and high salt concentrations. The most concerning of foodborne listeriosis is the cross-contamination of ready to eat products such as seafood, meats, and poultry.

*L. monocytogenes* was first discovered in 1926 in connection with an outbreak of disease in rabbits. Later on, it was found in humans. There are 8 different spp and only one, *Listeria monocytogenes*, is considered pathogenic in both humans and animals. The interesting part is that when one species is found it is likely that 2 other species are present also.

The good news is that these bacteria can be destroyed just by pasteurization process; it does not survive at low pH and does not like competition of high numbers of different bacteria.

Do not take chances, keep ready to eat product away from non-cooked meats. Check the refrigerator for forgotten smoked salmon or soft cheeses or if any product looks off; if it's been awhile since the package was opened discard it. *Listeria monocytogenes* can multiply at refrigerator temperature. If even one colony was present in that product, once the package was opened allowing for more available air the number of bacteria could go higher.

*By Elena Connors- Impact Microbiology Services Ltd*

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