

# Prevent getting sick from *Listeria*

*Listeria* is a harmful germ that can be in some food.



**It rarely affects people who have a strong immune system.**

Most young, healthy adults won't get sick from *Listeria*.

**But it can cause serious illness and even death if you have a weakened immune system.**

This is because a weakened immune system isn't as able to recognize and get rid of harmful germs like *Listeria*.

75% of people who get sick from *Listeria* have health conditions that can weaken their immune system, such as cancer and heart or kidney disease.

People with weakened immune systems who get *Listeria* almost always have to be hospitalized, and, sadly, 1 in 6 die.

## You likely have a weakened immune system if:

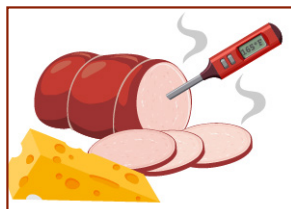
- A healthcare provider told you so.
- You have a health condition like cancer, diabetes, liver or kidney disease, alcoholism, or HIV.
- You take medicine like immunosuppressants or steroids.

## You can take steps to prevent getting *Listeria*.

**Choose safer food options.** See the next page for foods not to eat and foods to choose instead.

**Check for recalled foods** contaminated with *Listeria*:  
[www.foodsafety.gov/recalls-and-outbreaks](http://www.foodsafety.gov/recalls-and-outbreaks)

**Call a healthcare provider right away** if you have a fever and feel more tired and achy than normal. You may also have a headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or seizures. Early treatment can help save your life.



Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention  
National Center for Emerging and  
Zoonotic Infectious Diseases

[www.cdc.gov/listeria](http://www.cdc.gov/listeria)

# Choose safer foods to prevent getting sick from *Listeria*

*Listeria* is a harmful germ that can be in food. It can cause serious illness and even death in people with weakened immune systems and in older adults. The good news is that you can choose safer food options to prevent getting sick.

## Quick guide to safer food options

*Listeria* can grow at cold temperatures in refrigerators, but it is easily killed by heat.

In general, foods that are safer include:

**Cooked or reheated foods** that reach a high enough temperature for germs to be killed. (You can let the food cool before eating.)

**Shelf-stable foods** are heated or dried to kill germs that can cause illness or spoil food. They are in sealed cans, jars, or pouches that do not need to be refrigerated until opened.

**Pasteurized foods** are heated to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to kill germs.

	Avoid	Choose these instead
<b>Cheese</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unpasteurized soft cheeses, such as queso fresco and brie</li> <li>Unheated cheeses sliced at a deli</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hard cheeses, such as cheddar and parmesan</li> <li>Cottage cheese, cream cheese, string cheese, feta, and mozzarella</li> <li>Pasteurized soft cheeses, such as queso fresco and brie, heated to an internal temperature of 165°F or until steaming hot</li> <li>Deli-sliced cheeses heated to 165°F or until steaming hot</li> </ul>
<b>Deli meat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unheated deli meat, cold cuts, hot dogs, and fermented or dry sausages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deli meat, cold cuts, hot dogs, and fermented or dry sausages reheated to 165°F or until steaming hot</li> </ul>
<b>Deli salads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Premade deli salads, such as coleslaw and potato, tuna, or chicken salad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homemade deli salads</li> </ul>
<b>Pâté &amp; meat spreads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refrigerated pâté or meat spreads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shelf-stable pâté or meat spreads</li> </ul>
<b>Smoked fish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refrigerated smoked fish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shelf-stable smoked fish</li> <li>Smoked fish cooked in a casserole or other cooked dishes</li> </ul>
<b>Sprouts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raw or lightly cooked sprouts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sprouts cooked until steaming hot</li> </ul>
<b>Melon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut melon left out for more than 2 hours (1 hour if it's exposed to temperatures above 90°F)</li> <li>Cut melon in refrigerator for more than a week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Melon that has just been cut</li> </ul>
<b>Milk, yogurt, &amp; ice cream</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raw (unpasteurized) milk, yogurt, and ice cream</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pasteurized milk, yogurt, and ice cream</li> </ul>



Scan the QR code to learn why some foods are riskier

[www.cdc.gov/listeria/prevention.html](http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/prevention.html)

