

29 Aug 2019

Listeriosis outbreak in Spain

Cases have been associated with consumption of a shredded meat product from Seville

As of 27 August, an outbreak of [listeriosis](#) with 196 cases and two deaths has been reported by the Ministry of Health in Spain [1].

The cases have been associated with the consumption of shredded pork of the brand 'La Mechá' prepared by MAGRUDIS S.L. in the municipality of Seville [1]. The company has voluntarily assumed the withdrawal of the product from its customers [2] and discontinued production.

The affected product was mostly sold in Andalusia, southern Spain [2]. Most of the cases of listeriosis have been reported in Seville (161) but cases have also been reported in Cádiz (10), Granada (4), Huelva (17) and Málaga (4). It is possible that some of the affected product is still available in Spain as it has a long expiry date.

Listeriosis is a rare but potentially life-threatening disease. Healthy adults are likely to experience only mild infection, with flu-like symptoms or gastroenteritis [3]. However, listeriosis can be dangerous for pregnant women, the elderly, infants and people with weakened immune systems [3,4]. Pregnant women are about 20 times more likely to contract listeriosis than other healthy adults [4]. Invasive listeriosis is a more severe form of the disease and affects high risk groups [4]. Symptoms may include fever, muscle pain, septicaemia or meningitis.

The incubation period (time between consumption of the bacteria and symptoms developing) can be just a few days, but invasive disease symptoms may appear up to 90 days after consuming the bacteria [4]. Listeriosis can be treated if diagnosed early; antibiotics are used to treat severe symptoms such as meningitis [4].

Advice for travellers

Listeria monocytogenes bacteria are typically spread by contaminated foods. The bacterium can grow at low temperatures, including refrigeration temperatures of below 5°C. It is, however, killed by cooking food thoroughly and by pasteurisation [3]. The infection can also be transmitted between humans; pregnant women can pass the infection to their unborn baby.

If you have a package of "Mecha" branded meat you should refrain from consuming it [2]. If you have consumed the affected product and develop symptoms, you should seek medical advice [2]. It is sensible to follow [food and water hygiene advice](#) while travelling and wash your hands before eating or preparing food.

Resources

- [World Health Organization: Listeriosis](#)
- [World Health Organization: recommendations for international travel and trade in relation to the Listeriosis outbreak in Spain](#)
- [Public Health England: Listeria guidance data and analysis](#)

References

1. [Ministry of Health Spain, Listeriosis outbreak associated with the consumption of prepared meat. 27 August 2019 \[Accessed 29 August 2019\]](#)
2. [Spanish Agency Food Safety and Nutrition, Outbreak of food poisoning caused by Listeria monocytogenes associated with the consumption of prepared meat. 20 August 2019 \[Accessed 29 August 2019\]](#)
3. [Public Health England, Listeria: guidance, data and analysis. 18 July 2018 \[Accessed 29 August 2019\]](#)
4. [World Health Organization, Listeriosis, February 2018, \[Accessed 29 August 2019\]](#)