**Recent Listeria Outbreak Linked To Cheese (excerpted from FORBES magazine)**

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Listeria was recently identified as the cause of one death and four others being sickened in four states; the Listeria was linked to cheese distributed by Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Company based in Waterloo, Wisconsin.

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On July 3rd, Crave Brothers voluntarily recalled several lots of its cheese products,–Les Frères, Petit Frère, and Petit Frère with Truffles cheeses with production dates of July 1, 2013 or earlier due to possible *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination.

On July 5th, Whole Foods announced the removal of these products off their shelves after Crave Brothers announced their recall.

Listeriosis is a serious illness and is typically the result of eating food contaminated by the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*. Listeria is generally contracted by eating poorly processed deli meats and unpasteurized milk products. Listeria was also identified in a recent outbreak ultimately linked to tainted cantaloupes in September through October 2011, in which 33 people died out of 147 people being sickened.

Listeria is more of a concern in the elderly, the very young, and those with weakened immune systems. Pregnant women are also at risk for miscarriages and stillbirths, as well as other effects of the bacteria, most commonly in their third trimester of pregnancy.

Patients taking corticosteroids as well as those undergoing chemotherapy are most at risk. However, in some rare cases, healthy persons without any specific risk factors may also be affected.

*Listeria monocytogenes* typically causes gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain, along with fatigue and muscle aches. It also may produce symptoms concerning for meningitis such as a stiff neck along with a frontal headache and fever, which can progress to encephalitis with confusion and delirium.

Public health investigators utilize a technique referred to as DNA fingerprinting using pulsed field gel electrophoresis or PFGE to identify the “fingerprints” of potential bacteria involved in outbreaks of suspected foodborne illness.   Nationwide and worldwide, a data bank of such fingerprints obtained from local, state and federal agencies has been created and organized into what is referred to as [*Pulsenet*](http://www.cdc.gov/pulsenet/).

*Pulsenet* analyzes and compares the DNA fingerprints from different patients to determine if a potential cluster of cases is developing which could represent an early outbreak.  The CDC monitors this activity closely in an ongoing effort to protect the public.  [The Listeria initiative](http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/pdf/ListeriaInitiativeOverview_508.pdf) is another surveillance network that identifies new cases of Listeria which are ultimately reported to *Pulsenet*.

Antibiotics commonly used to treat Listeria include ampicillin, penicillin, trimethoprim as well as erythromycin, tetracycline and gentamicin.  There have been multiple reports of multidrug resistant (MDR) Listeria in the past several years, specifically to tetracycline as well as erythromycin. Scientists have recently identified specific [resistance plasmids](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23774482) unique to Listeria which harbor certain sequences that are involved in resistance to particular drugs.