

March 15, 2010

***Listeria monocytogenes* Testing Specimen Collection for Foodborne Illness**

To Health Care Providers,

Listeriosis is a foodborne illness that usually presents as a self-limited syndrome with malaise, fever, and diarrhea with no further untoward outcome. In a minority of cases, particularly in the immunocompromised, neonates, elderly and pregnant women, septicaemia, meningitis, and fetal loss can ensue. Ingestion of suspect food does not necessarily result in infection with *Listeria*.

Individuals who have eaten suspect food only require laboratory testing if they have symptoms of meningitis and invasive disease. Specimens for *Listeria monocytogenes* should not be collected on asymptomatic patients.

If the patient has invasive disease symptoms such as fever or meningitis:

Specimens to be submitted to a local diagnostic laboratory:

- Blood cultures
 - Two sets of blood cultures should be taken from different sites. A third set of blood cultures should be drawn if and only if endocarditis is suspected. Collect another set of blood cultures after 48hrs if the previous cultures are negative and there is ongoing concern of invasive infection with *Listeria monocytogenes*.
- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)
- Sterile site fluids and tissues such as joint fluid, cord blood and placental tissue

Specimens to be sent to the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion public health laboratories (PHL):

- All *Listeria monocytogenes* isolates from diagnostic laboratories
- Stool specimens for culture of *Listeria monocytogenes*
 - Acceptance of stools specimens for culture for *Listeria monocytogenes* testing requires the presence of all three of the following criteria: 1) symptomatic, 2) high risk- including immunocompromised, pregnant, neonate, 3) with ingestion of implicated food. Stool cultures will not be accepted without the prior approval of a PHL Medical Microbiologist (please contact 416-526-5441). If approved, these samples will be forwarded to the

Listeriosis Reference Service, Bureau of Microbial Hazards, Health Canada in Ottawa.

- Food samples
 - Must be forwarded through public health units. Acceptable foods are those that have been ingested and are suspected of containing *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Specimens not accepted or available:

- Serology

For Further Information:

- Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion public health laboratories HELPLINE at **1-800-640-7221**
- Specimen Collection Guide website
<http://www.oahpp.ca/services/specimen-collection-guide.html>