

## Hot News

### Rising in *Listeria monocytogenes* infection – any risk for persons living with HIV?

Infection by the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes* can produce gastrointestinal symptoms or severe systemic clinical forms, with sepsis, abscesses, meningitis, etc. Although it is a rare disease, it is on the rise in Europe and North America. It is a mandatory notifiable disease. The bacteria can contaminate foods such as unpasteurized dairy products, uncooked sausages, and raw seafood. Listeriosis is especially dangerous in pregnant women, newborns, and immunocompromised patients.

#### *Listeriosis in Spain*

From January 2000 to the end of 2021, a total of 8152 patients with listeriosis were hospitalized in Spain (Vázquez *et al. Int J Infect Dis* 2024). About half were immunocompromised. The average age of hospitalized individuals with listeriosis was 60 years. The rate of admission for listeriosis increased from 5/million in 2000 to 9/million in 2021. Mortality in hospitalized patients with listeriosis was high (17%) and more pronounced in the elderly.

An outbreak in Andalusia due to contaminated stuffed pork meat produced a peak in 2019, with 207 confirmed cases, four deaths and six abortions (Fernández-Martínez *et al. Euro Surveill* 2022). On the contrary, the COVID-19 pandemic and confinement caused a drop in listeriosis in 2020.

#### *Listeriosis in pregnant women*

Pregnant women have a higher risk of developing clinical manifestations after *Listeria* infection. Among the most frequent and serious complications are fetal death and neurological damage.

Hospitalizations for listeriosis in pregnant women in Spain since 2000 have increased significantly. A total of 540 cases were recorded (Vázquez *et al. J Infect Public Health* 2025), causing 146 cases of spontaneous abortions, and fetal or neonatal death. Other infants survived despite being premature and/or suffering neonatal complications.

#### *Listeriosis in immunocompromised patients*

Listeriosis has a worse prognosis in immunosuppressed patients. Overall, 48% of hospitalizations for listeriosis in Spain since 2000 occurred in patients with some immunosuppression (Vázquez *et al. Pathog Glob Health* 2025). The most frequent diseases associated with immunodeficiency were diabetes (40%), chronic renal failure (and dialysis) (20%), lymphomas/leukemias (19%), cirrhosis (12%), primary immunodeficiencies (3%), transplants (3%), and autoimmune diseases. The proportion of immunocompromised people with listeriosis has increased over the past two decades. Its mortality is 2-fold that observed in non-immunosuppressed patients with listeriosis.

Patients with HIV infection and listeriosis are uncommon. A total of 55 were identified during the study period, that is, 1.3% of those with immunosuppression. They had differential characteristics compared to the rest of immunosuppressed patients with listeriosis, as they were younger (mean age 50 years), more frequently male (65%) and their mortality was lower (9.8%). Sepsis and meningoencephalitis were the most frequent clinical complications.

#### *Prevention of listeriosis*

Clinical suspicion should be increased for listeriosis, to allow earlier diagnosis and proper management and treatment. Actions to improve food hygiene and safety,

#### \*Correspondence:

Vicente Soriano

E-mail: vicente.soriano@unir.net

1139-6121 / © 2025 AIDS Reviews. Published by Permanyer. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Received: 04-03-2025

Accepted: 11-03-2025

DOI: 10.24875/AIDSRev.M25000082

Available online: 14-05-2025

AIDS Rev. 2025;27(1):33-34

[www.aidsreviews.com](http://www.aidsreviews.com)

which reduce the risk of contamination, should be prioritized (*Herrador et al. Euro Surveill 2019*). *Listeria* grows at low temperatures (4°C) and is destroyed above 74°C. Therefore, it is advisable to avoid unpasteurized dairy products (fresh cheese, etc.); heating meats and sausages before eating; wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly; and consume well-cooked fish and seafood.

Epidemiological surveillance is essential to identify epidemic outbreaks quickly, which allow the source of contagion to be identified and the episode to end (*Mar-*

*shall et al. 1999*). *MMWR 2020*). Finally, it is advisable to strengthen health education, especially in the most susceptible populations, such as the immunosuppressed and pregnant women. Our findings suggest that HIV is not a particularly susceptible group for listeriosis.

*Elena Vázquez<sup>1</sup>, Victor Moreno-Torres<sup>1,2</sup>, and Vicente Soriano<sup>1\*</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>*Universidad internacional de La Rioja (UNIR);*

<sup>2</sup>*Puerta de Hierro University Hospital. Madrid, Spain*