

# LISTERIA OUTBREAK UPDATE

## Information for clinicians

*Please distribute this information to all staff*

1. A national outbreak of listeriosis has been reported related to rockmelon
2. Advise patients at increased risk of listeriosis to avoid consuming high risk foods
3. **ONLY test if the patient has symptoms consistent with listeriosis and is at higher risk of developing listeriosis. There is no value in testing asymptomatic patients.**

### Background

Fifteen cases of listeriosis have been reported in elderly and immunocompromised people across New South Wales (NSW) so far this year, including three deaths.

A national outbreak of ten cases affecting three states and territories (including six cases from NSW) has recently been linked to a rockmelon grower in Nericon NSW. Consumers are advised to discard any rockmelon currently in refrigerators if they are unsure of the producer.

### Advice for patients who have eaten rockmelon:

- Assure patients that the risk on an individual level is very low for this rare infection.
- Do not order tests for listeriosis, unless the patient has symptoms of listeriosis and is at higher risk of developing listeriosis. **There is no value in testing asymptomatic patients.**
- If testing is indicated, collect a blood culture.
- Advise vulnerable patients to be aware of early symptoms of listeriosis - such as fever, muscle aches, nausea and diarrhoea - so that they can seek early assessment, testing and treatment if required.
- Advise patients at increased risk of listeriosis to avoid consuming high risk foods.

### General Listeria Advice

- Listeria is a rare disease with only 20-30 cases reported each year in New South Wales.
- People at increased risk of listeriosis include: the elderly, pregnant women and the fetus, newborns, and people with weakened immune systems (for example: people on cancer treatment or corticosteroids and people with diabetes, renal disease, hepatic disease or HIV infection).
- Listeriosis during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or infection in newborns.
- Patients at increased risk of listeriosis should be made aware of which foods are at higher risk of *Listeria* contamination to avoid and other prevention measures outlined in the NSW Health Listeriosis Factsheet: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/listeriosis.html>

### Further Information

Contact your local Public Health Unit on **1300 066 055** (statewide).



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