

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



Department of

**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÄNNYSTRIE O

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HSS(MD)19/2008

To: All General Practitioners
Medical Directors HSC Trusts (*for onward
dissemination to all Doctors*)
Consultant Microbiologists
Directors of Public Health HSS Boards
CCDCs
Regional Epidemiologists, CDSCNI
Director, Food Standards Agency NI

Your Ref:

Our Ref: HSS(MD)19/2008

Date: 25 June 2008

Dear Colleague

RECENT CLUSTER OF CASES OF LISTERIOSIS IN THE BELFAST TRUST

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with some information on Listeriosis and to alert you to the fact that a multiagency investigation is underway into a cluster of cases of Listeriosis linked with the Belfast Trust. All have been in elderly, debilitated patients and 3, who were ill with other conditions, have died.

Listeriosis

Listeriosis is an uncommon disease in Northern Ireland with up to six cases reported annually. It is a bacterial disease which usually presents as meningo-encephalitis and/or septicaemia in newborns and adults. In pregnant women it presents as fever and miscarriage. Otherwise healthy people may have only an acute mild febrile illness. Invasive listeriosis is diagnosed when the organism is cultured from a normally sterile site such as blood or CSF.

Those at highest risk are neonates, the elderly, immunocompromised individuals, pregnant women and people with alcoholism, cirrhosis or diabetes.

It may have a **long incubation period** and can take between one and over 90 days for illness to develop, with an average of 30 days.

Listeriosis is usually acquired through eating contaminated food. Foods associated with transmission are most often ready-to-eat refrigerated and processed foods such as pre-prepared cooked and chilled meals, soft cheeses, cold cuts of meat, pates and smoked fish.

