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## Ontario Listeriosis Outbreak Linked to Plant-based Milk Recall (Silk and Great Value Brands)

**Attention:** Physicians, Hospitals, CNE, ER Manager, ER Physician, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Professionals, Community Health Centres, Walk-In Urgent Care Clinic, Nurse Practitioner, Ontario Health, Ontario Health Teams, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Indigenous Healthcare & Community, Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Paramedic Services, Corrections

**Date:** July 11, 2024

**Updated:** August 14, 2023 (Clinical Supports)

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### **Food Recall & Epidemiology**

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has issued a [food recall warning](#) for various Silk and Great Value brand plant-based refrigerated beverages due to potential contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*. On July 9, 2024, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) notified its institutional settings such as long-term care homes, retirement homes and licensed childcare centres about the recall. This notification included direction to cease the use of affected products immediately with remaining products to be disposed of or returned to the supplier/location of purchase.

**As of July 8, 2024, there have been nine (9) confirmed cases in the province of Ontario associated with the outbreak, including five (5) hospitalizations with the majority of the cases occurring since June 2024.** Locally, there has been one case of Listeriosis reported in May. However, there has been no linkage to the provincial outbreak at this time.

### **Listeriosis**

Listeriosis has been associated with severe morbidity and mortality in vulnerable populations including newborns, older adults, pregnant women and persons whose immune systems are compromised. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cramps
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Constipation
- Muscle aches

In severe cases, symptoms could also include stiff neck, confusion, headache, and/or loss of balance. The incubation period for listeriosis can be from three days up to three weeks and in some cases, symptoms



can appear 70 days after exposure. **Given the long incubation period, clinicians are asked to remain vigilant as additional cases related to this outbreak may continue to occur over the coming weeks.**

### **Clinical Supports**

Public Health Ontario has the following guidance regarding Listeriosis:

- [Listeria monocytogenes: Information for Health Professionals](#)
  - Reviews patient management of individuals with elevated risk of invasive listeriosis
  - Outlines appropriate antimicrobial therapies to be used with invasive clinical syndromes
- Specimen Collection
  - **Testing for *L. monocytogenes* in asymptomatic people** who consumed a contaminated or recalled food product **is not recommended**
  - Two sets of routine blood cultures should be ordered when listeriosis is being considered and submitted via normal laboratory pathways (e.g. Lifelabs, Gamma Dynacare)
    - **Note:** Do not send blood cultures to PHOL
  - Stool cultures and serology for *L. monocytogenes* are not recommended
- [Abstract: Listeria monocytogenes – Clinical and Food Testing Guidelines for Foodborne Illness Outbreaks](#)
  - Outlines clinical testing criteria based on symptoms and/or exposures

### **Prevention & Patient Counselling**

Direct your patients to the following resources that highlight key protective behaviors:

- [Listeriosis Patient Fact Sheet](#)

### **Reporting Requirements**

Listeriosis is designated as a disease of public health significance in Ontario. Suspected or confirmed cases of listeriosis are reportable to local public health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.7* and must be communicated to SMDHU using the [Disease of Public Health Significance reporting form](#), formerly known as the *Communicable Disease Reporting Form*.

For more information on listeriosis in Simcoe Muskoka please visit our [Health Professionals Portal](#) and our [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) toolkit.