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HEALTH ALERT---LISTERIA INFECTIONS

The following represents a compilation of the precautions recommended by FSIS (www.fsis.usda.gov) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/listeriosis_g.htm.) The general recommendations include:

- Do not drink raw (unpasteurized) milk or foods that contain unpasteurized milk.
- Wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating.
- Keep the refrigerator temperature at 40°F (4.4°C) or lower; the freezer at 0°F (-17.8°C) or lower.
- Eat precooked, perishable, or ready-to-eat food as soon as possible.
- Keep raw meat, fish, and poultry separate from other food that will not be cooked and from cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands, knives, and cutting boards after handling uncooked food.

Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources to a safe internal temperature: ground beef 160°F (71°C); chicken 170°F (77°C); turkey 180°F (82°C); the following additional recommendations were made for individuals at high risk such as pregnant women and those who are immunocompromised:

- Do not eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, bologna, or other delicatessen meats unless they are reheated until steaming hot; avoid the use of microwave ovens for reheating such meats since uneven cooking may occur [40].
- Avoid contamination of utensils and food preparation surfaces with fluid from packages containing hot dogs, luncheon meats, delicatessen meats, raw meat, chicken, turkey, or seafood. Hand washing is also important immediately after handling of any of these products.
- Do not eat prepackaged salads containing ham, chicken, egg, tuna, or seafood.
- Do not eat soft cheeses such as feta, Brie, and Camembert, blue-veined cheeses, or Mexican-style cheeses such as queso blanco, queso fresco, and Panela, unless they have labels that clearly state they are made from pasteurized milk.
- Do not eat refrigerated pates or meat spreads. However, canned or shelf-stable products are safe and can be eaten by pregnant women.
- Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is cooked as in a casserole. Refrigerated smoked seafood, such as salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, or mackerel, is most often labeled as "nova-style," "lox," "kippered," "smoked," or "jerky." Such fish products are typically found in the refrigerator section or sold at deli counters of grocery stores and delicatessens. However, canned or shelf-stable smoked seafood may be eaten.