



LISTERIA MONOCYTOGENES

Statement:

In the United States, commercial peanut processing must include a “kill step” – or a step to eliminate microbiological contamination from harmful bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes*. The roasting process satisfies this requirement. In addition, the American Peanut Council has adopted the U.S. Food & Drug Administration’s Good Manufacturing Practices, a voluntary code that also recommends thorough sanitizing of hands, work surfaces, and utensils to further reduce risk.

Since raw foods, including raw peanuts can become contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*, it is important that peanut processing plants have effective programs in place for the prevention of cross contamination from raw areas to areas of the plant where peanuts that have been exposed to the “kill step” can become contaminated. Examples of these programs include the use of practices as such as structural barriers, controlled water flow and filtered airflow.

There are no known cases of peanut products being contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* in the United States.

Fact Sheet:

Listeria spp. is a group of bacteria that contains six species. Among these species, [*Listeria monocytogenes*](#) is the leading cause of human listeriosis, a serious infection caused by eating contaminated food.

Listeriosis affects primarily pregnant women, newborns and adults with weakened immune systems. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches and sometimes gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea or diarrhea. Infected pregnant women may experience only a mild flu-like illness; however, infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage or stillbirth, premature delivery, or infection of the newborn.

Listeria monocytogenes is found in soil, water, food and moist environments. Raw foods can become contaminated from soil or from manure used as fertilizer. Animals can carry the bacterium without appearing ill and can contaminate foods of animal origin such as meats and dairy products. The bacterium has been found in a variety of raw foods, such as uncooked meats and vegetables, as well as in processed foods that become contaminated after processing, such as soft cheeses and cold cuts at the deli counter. Unpasteurized (raw) milk or foods made from unpasteurized milk may also contain the bacterium.

Listeria monocytogenes is killed by pasteurization, and heating procedures used to prepare ready-to-eat processed meats. The general guidelines recommended for reducing the risk of *listeriosis* are: thoroughly cook meats, wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating, separate uncooked meats from vegetables, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods, avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or foods made from raw milk, and wash hands, knives, and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods.

Approved 12/11/14. For further information, please contact the American Peanut Council office in Alexandria, Va. at: Tel: 703-838-9500; email: info@peanutsusa.com.

Sources:

Food and Drug Administration. [Bad Bug Book, Foodborne Pathogenic Microorganisms and Natural Toxins. Second Edition.](#) pp. 99. 2012.
<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/>