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**Health Protection Agency /Maldives Food And Drug Authority
Ministry Of Health
Male' Maldives**

Information Sheet on Listeriosis

What is Listeriosis?

Listeriosis is treatable with antibiotics if diagnosed early. Listeriosis mainly affects pregnant women, elderly and people with weakened immune systems. We also advice the public to watch out for symptoms of listeriosis, and report to a doctor if you suffer from these symptoms after having consumed cheese. Remember to tell your doctor that you had consumed cheese in the few days preceding the illness.

Who are at the greatest risk of serious illness due to listeriosis?

Pregnant women, the elderly or individuals with a weakened immune system, i.e. people in immuno-compromised status due to AIDS, leukaemia, cancer, kidney transplant and steroid therapy, are at greatest risk of severe listeriosis.

What are the symptoms or clinical manifestations of listeriosis?

The symptoms depend on the physiological and immune status of the patient.

Mild listeriosis: Most people in general get mild symptoms. These usually include fever and muscle aches, preceded by diarrhea, or other gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal discomfort or pain.

Severe listeriosis: This is particularly seen among persons with weakened immune systems. The most frequent clinical features of severe listeriosis is a neurological syndrome e.g. severe headache, meningitis or encephalitis (an infection of the brain or its surrounding tissues).

Clinical manifestations in pregnant women: The mother usually becomes infected in the last 3 months of pregnancy, but is often asymptomatic, or has mild fever. Clinical features include fever, diarrhoea, abortion or stillbirth; However, newborns of pregnant mothers with listeriosis have a high risk of developing sepsis, pneumonia.

What should you do if you have purchased contaminated cheese?

It is best to return any of these products you may have purchased to the retail shop you bought it from, or to MFDA. If this is not possible, it should be **disposed safely**.

How could you dispose of contaminated cheese safely?

Listeria can grow in cut cheese at room and refrigerator temperatures. *Listeria* can also spread to other cheeses cut with the same utensils or on the same cutting board or stored in the same area. Follow these simple steps if recalled cheese is or was in your home:

- **Dispose of recalled cheese** by making an opening in the container or package and disposing it in a closed plastic bag. This will prevent people from eating or re-selling it.
- **Consider discarding other cheeses** cut with the same knife or on the same surface as recalled cheese.
- **Wash the cheese drawer** and other areas where the cheese was stored in the refrigerator with hot water and soap. Sanitize the area with a solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach to one gallon (4 liters) of hot water.
- **Wash cutting boards, surfaces, and utensils** used to cut, serve, or store cheese. Use hot water and soap, followed by sanitizing with a diluted bleach solution described above. If available, use a dishwasher.
- **Wash hands** with warm water and soap following the cleaning and sanitation process.