

# The Infection

 LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY  
Health Department  
www.ldchealth.org

# Connection

## Additional cases of listeriosis still possible

Though the worst may be over in the deadliest foodborne outbreak in 25 years, listeriosis still has the potential to cause more illness.

Symptoms of the infection can occur three to 70 days following exposure. The recent outbreak, which has been linked to Rocky Ford cantaloupes, has sickened or killed hundreds of people in 11 states. Kansas has now had 10 cases of listeriosis, including three deaths, definitively linked to the multi-state

outbreak.

The three additional cases from the last update provided by Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) on Sept. 22 have been linked to the multi-state outbreak as a result of additional laboratory tests. Typically, Kansas reports fewer than six cases of listeriosis per year.

Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, diarrhea and vomiting. Groups at elevated risk for the

disease are pregnant women, newborns, persons with immunocompromising conditions and older adults.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and KDHE, the risk of illness increases especially in people age 50 and older.

Pregnancy-associated listeriosis can lead to fetal loss, preterm delivery and neonatal sepsis and meningitis. In most, but not all, cases of fetal or



neonatal infection, the mother has a history of symptoms consistent with listeriosis.

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IGRA testing can distinguish between patients who have been infected with TB and patients who have been vaccinated with BCG (bacille Calmette-Guerin).

## Health Department recommends IGRA testing under certain criteria

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has recently changed its tuberculosis screening protocols to implement the broader use of Interferon-Gamma Release Assays (IGRA) for latent tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis.

This test can distinguish between patients who have been infected with TB and patients who have been vaccinated with BCG (bacille Calmette-Guerin), who would test positive using the Mantoux skin test. As a result, the Health Department is now ordering IGRAs, a whole-blood test, for clients that meet certain criteria.

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## Reduced-cost vaccines available to adults that qualify

### Four vaccines covered

Two programs providing reduced cost vaccines for adults without insurance or whose insurance doesn't cover vaccines are now available at the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department.

Clients eligible for these programs may receive vaccine for just the administrative cost of \$14.

The first program provides the **Tdap** (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccine to adults **at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level** and is sponsored by Sanofi-Pasteur Company and AmeriCares organization.

With a recent resurgence of pertussis infections around the United States and with vaccine immunity waning over time, it's important for adults to update their tetanus shot with Tdap vaccine, said Nurse Kathy Colson, Health

Department immunization team leader. Another program offers the **MMR** (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), **varicella** and **pneumococcal vaccines** to adults **who meet income guidelines provided by the Merck Company**.

The pneumococcal vaccine, which protects against blood and spinal fluid infections, is especially recommended for adults who smoke, have asthma or other chronic health conditions. The income guidelines for this program are very generous, Colson said.

"These programs are the first the Health Department has had to assist adults who otherwise may not be able to afford these necessary immunizations," Colson said. "Vaccines not only protect you, but those around you."

For more information, go to [www.ldchealth.org/immunizations.htm](http://www.ldchealth.org/immunizations.htm) or call (785) 843-0721.

## Douglas County Disease Report

| Disease category         | Disease name           | July 11 | Aug. 11 | Sept. 11 | Total |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------|---------|----------|-------|
| Enteric                  | Campylobacter          | 0       | 3       | 2        | 5     |
|                          | Cryptosporidiosis      | 0       | 1       | 2        | 3     |
|                          | E. coli- shiga toxin   | 1       | 0       | 0        | 1     |
|                          | Giardiasis             | 0       | 1       | 0        | 1     |
|                          | Salmonella             | 2       | 2       | 3        | 7     |
| General                  | Hepatitis B            | 1       | 1       | 0        | 2     |
|                          | Hepatitis C            | 2       | 1       | 4        | 7     |
|                          | Meningitis- bacterial  | 0       | 1       | 0        | 1     |
|                          | Strep pneumo. invasive | 0       | 1       | 0        | 1     |
| Vector-borne             | Lyme disease           | 0       | 0       | 1        | 1     |
|                          | RMSF                   | 1       | 0       | 1        | 2     |
|                          | Tularemia              | 1       | 0       | 0        | 1     |
| Vaccine-preventable      | Pertussis              | 0       | 0       | 1        | 1     |
|                          | Varicella              | 3       | 2       | 2        | 7     |
| STDs (tested at HD only) | Chlamydia              | 4       | 5       | 18       | 27    |
|                          | Gonorrhea              | 0       | 2       | 3        | 5     |

This report includes the number of cases investigated by the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department. Case classifications include: Confirmed, probable and suspect.



Mai Xiaohe, a University of Kansas School of Pharmacy student, receives a flu shot from Health Department nurse Catherine Bird. Xiaohe was one of several volunteer vaccinators who later provided immunizations to the public during the Oct. 8 drive-through flu vaccination clinic.

## Flu season in full swing

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has given 1,395 flu shots so far this season with 505 shots provided during a drive-through flu vaccination clinic.

The Oct. 8 clinic, held at the University of Kansas Park and Ride lots at 23rd and Iowa, was organized to test community public health emergency response plans. In its second year, the event doubled in size and couldn't have happened without

the help of 17 community partners. Some of those groups included Lawrence Memorial Hospital, Haskell Health Center, Heartland Community Health Center, Washburn University School of Nursing and University of Kansas School of Pharmacy.

Heartland Community Health Center, along with Downtown Lawrence, Inc., also helped organize a downtown flu vaccination clinic on Oct. 22.

## Listeriosis can present differently

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Another issue with this infection is that it presents differently depending on the type of infection and the host. In older adults and persons with immunocompromising conditions, septicemia and meningitis are the most common clinical presentations. Pregnant women may experi-

ence a mild, flu-like illness followed by fetal loss or bacteremia and meningitis in their newborns. Immunocompetent persons may experience acute febrile gastroenteritis or no symptoms.

If you suspect listeriosis in one of your patients, please call the Health Department at (785) 843-0721 and ask for a communicable disease (CD) nurse.

## IGRA testing has many advantages

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Those criteria include:

- Persons who have had BCG vaccine
- International students/refugees/immigrants from countries with high rates of TB
- Individuals who have had a positive TB skin test and negative chest X-ray and desire further testing before beginning latent tuberculosis infection medications
- Individuals that communicable disease nurses deem necessary.

IGRAs require only one office visit and results can be available within 24 hours. Health Department clients determined to benefit from IGRA testing can go to Watkins Student Health Center at the University of Kansas, Lawrence Memorial Hospital or a lab of the patient's choice.

The patient is responsible for payment of the IGRA testing. Currently, the test is available for \$33 at Watkins Student Health Center.

## Laughter is the best medicine

