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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clark County Health District Issues a Food Safety Warning for Pregnant Women

(Las Vegas, Nev. – May 25, 2000) – The Clark County Health District recently identified a case of listeriosis in a newborn infant. Listeriosis is a serious bacterial infection that is caused by eating contaminated food. A pregnant woman can pass the infection along to her unborn child.

The infection may lead to infants being stillborn, born with septicemia (bacteria in their blood), or the development of meningitis (inflammation of the covering of the brain or spinal cord) very early in life. These incidents may occur even if the mother has no symptoms.

Listeria has been found in raw foods, such as meats and vegetables, and in processed foods that become contaminated after processing, such as soft cheeses and cold cuts. Unpasteurized (raw) milk or foods made from unpasteurized milk may contain the bacteria. Pregnant women should avoid soft cheeses such as feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined and Mexican style cheese. (Hard cheeses, processed cheeses, cream cheese, cottage cheese, or yogurt need not be avoided.) Hot left-over foods or ready-to-eat foods, such as hot dogs, should be re-cooked until steaming and although

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the risk of listeriosis associated with foods from deli counters is low, pregnant women may choose to avoid these foods or thoroughly reheat cold cuts before eating.

Adults generally do not exhibit symptoms of listeriosis, but symptoms usually include a fever, muscle aches, and sometimes nausea or diarrhea. If the infection spreads to the nervous system, symptoms such as headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or convulsions may occur.

For more information on listeriosis contact CCHD's Office of Epidemiology at 383-1378.

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