

Friday, 13 April 2012

## Health Protection



### What is Listeria?

Listeria is a rare but potentially life-threatening disease. Most adults experience only mild infections of the eye and skin or gastroenteritis. It can, however, lead to severe illness including blood poisoning (bacteraemia) or meningitis.

Older people and individuals with weakened immune systems, including those who have cancer, AIDS or those with dialysis, are at increased risk. Listeria is particularly dangerous to pregnant as it can present as a mild and flu-like illness which is not serious for the mother but can cause miscarriage, premature delivery, still birth or even death in a newborn child.

### How do you get Listeria?

Infection usually occurs after eating food contaminated with Listeria bacteria. Foods associated with contamination are most often ready to eat, refrigerated and processed foods. These include pre-prepared cooked and chilled meals including sandwiches, soft cheeses, cold cuts of meat, pâté and smoked fish.

It is important to tell your appearance if food is contaminated. It will look, smell and taste normal. Listeria is also widespread in the environment and can be found in raw food, soil, sewage and in the faeces of some animals, birds and fish.

### How can I prevent Listeria infections?

- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as food, pork, or poultry
- Wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating
- Keep uncooked meats separate from vegetables and from cooked foods and ready to eat foods
- Avoid unpasteurized food such as foods made from unpasteurized milk
- Wash hands, knives, and cutting boards after handling processed foods
- Consume pasteurized and ready to eat foods as soon as possible
- Please report food safety and food quality problems to your local health department or other food safety and inspection control agencies.

[www.publichealth.hsc.ie](http://www.publichealth.hsc.ie)

Information and advice on Listeria.

## Details

Format

A4 one-page factsheet

Target group

Health professionals, general public

## Downloads

**Attachment**

**Size**

[Listeria Factsheet FINAL.PDF](#) 101.54 KB

[Print](#)