



Listeria - Fast Facts

Listeria is widely found in the environment but **most cases of the infection are due to contaminated food**. Listeria may not infect many people each year but it is important to be aware of it as it can cause infection and, in severe cases, death.

Which foods is it found in?

Chilled and ready-to-eat foods, such as:

- Cooked sliced meats, such as ham
- Cured meats
- Pre-packed sandwiches and salads
- Pâté
- Blue veined and mould-ripened soft cheese
- Cold smoked fish, such as smoked salmon

Who can contract Listeria?

Anyone can become ill from Listeria but there is a higher rate of illness in vulnerable people such as pregnant women, those with a weakened immune system and older people.

Symptoms of Listeria

For most people symptoms vary from none to flu-like symptoms, including high temperature, neck ache, confusion, weakness, vomiting and diarrhoea. Pregnant women may also experience mild flu-like symptoms but some cases can have a severe impact on expectant mothers and their unborn babies.

Duration of illness

Average seven days to several weeks.

How common is it?

Average of **15 cases reported per year** in Scotland.

How you can reduce the risk of Listeria

- Eat and drink fresh and ready-to-eat foods within the use by date
- Keep chilled ready-to-eat foods cold – make sure your fridge is working properly and is set between 0-5°C (don't keep these foods out of the fridge for too long – 4 hours max)
- Follow storage instructions on food packaging (use opened foods within 2 days)
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on foods, for example frozen vegetables packaging
- Wash vegetables, fruit and salad

If you think you have food poisoning, contact your GP or call NHS 24 on 111

More information

For more information on food safety at home and when you're eating out, visit:
www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety

Find out more about Listeria visit:
www.foodstandards.gov.scot/listeria-fact-sheet

If you have any questions about the information on this page, please contact:
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