

Listeria - Fast Facts



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

Which foods can it be 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
- Smoked fish

Who can contract listeria?

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

Symptoms of listeria

Symptoms include flu-like symptoms: high temperature, neck ache, confusion, weakness, vomiting and diarrhoea. Pregnant women may also experience flu-like symptoms but the infection can have a severe impact on 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

- Consume 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).
- Always follow storage instructions on food packaging (for example use opened foods within 2 days).
- Follow the manufacturer's cooking instructions on foods, for example on frozen vegetables.
- Always 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:
enquiries@fss.scot