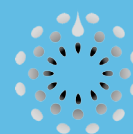




Listeria - take it seriously

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Listeria - take it seriously

Listeria is a comparatively rare but potentially severe form of foodborne illness caused by bacteria. It can be very dangerous for a number of groups including:

- Pregnant women and their unborn babies.
- Elderly people (<65 years old) especially if they have an underlying health issue.
- People who have a chronic disease such as diabetes, cancer or a suppressed immune systems.

- People taking a medicine that suppresses their immune system eg prednisone or cortisone.
- Organ transplant patients.

Listeria has also caused occasional outbreaks of mild gastroenteritis in healthy people. The symptoms of infection are mild and often are described as 'flu-like', although vomiting and diarrhoea can occur.

If a pregnant woman is infected, it can lead to miscarriage, premature birth or the still birth

of her baby even if she doesn't show the symptoms.

The time from infection to symptoms can be anywhere between **3 days** and **3 months**.

If you are unsure whether your condition or medication puts you in one of these at risk groups check with your GP on your next visit.



How to avoid Listeria infection

Listeria is a bacteria that is commonly found in the environment, meaning raw foods are more likely to be contaminated.

Listeria is easily **killed by heat**, however, cooked foods can easily become re-contaminated through poor food handling after cooking.

Unlike most other types of food poisoning bacteria, listeria can grow at refrigeration temperatures. To minimise risk of food poisoning, ready to eat food or leftovers should never be stored in the fridge for more than **24 hours**.

Listeria grows very slowly in the refrigerator so keep your food refrigerated at 5°C or less.

Other methods of prevention:

- Avoid eating packaged, ready to eat food, after their 'use by' date.
- Always look for cooking and storage instructions on the label and follow them when provided.
- Understand the risk of Listeria infection and avoid the following foods (listed) or cook to **75 °C** before eating.

Scan here to test your Listeria knowledge or for more information visit: www.foodsafety.asn.au



What are the higher risk foods?

At risk groups for *Listeria* infection are advised to avoid the foods listed below.

Meat and poultry	Safer alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold meats - cooked or uncooked, packaged or unpackaged sliced, ready to eat meat or poultry e.g. from delicatessen counters or sandwich bars etc • Cold cooked chicken - purchased whole, portions, sliced or diced and pre-packaged chicken sandwiches • Pâté - refrigerated pâté, liverwurst or meat spreads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home cooked meats - ensure minced meat or poultry is cooked to 75°C and used immediately or store any leftovers in fridge and use or freeze within a day of cooking • Hot takeaway chicken - eat hot or store immediately in the fridge and use within 24 hours • Canned or bottled pâté or meat spreads - refrigerate after opening and use within 24 hours
Dairy	Safer alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-packaged and delicatessen soft, semi soft and surface ripened cheeses e.g. brie, Camembert, ricotta, feta and blue • Unpasteurised dairy products e.g. raw goats milk • Soft serve ice cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard cheese (e.g. cheddar, tasty), store in fridge • Processed cheese, cheese spreads, plain cream cheese, plain cottage cheese packaged by the manufacturer, store in the fridge and used promptly • Pasteurised milk and dairy products (e.g. pasteurised milk, yoghurt, custard, dairy dessert) • Packaged frozen ice cream, store in freezer
Fruit and vegetables	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-prepared or pre-packaged fruit, vegetables or salads e.g. from salad bars, retail outlets etc • Pre-cut fruit and vegetables that will be eaten raw • Frozen fruit or vegetables that may not be further cooked e.g. berries, sweet corn • Rock melon/cantaloupes (whole or cut) • Bean or seed sprouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home made salads and whole fruit and vegetables, wash all vegetables and fruit thoroughly • Store any leftover prepared salads in fridge, use within a day of preparation • Cooked frozen fruits and vegetables
Chilled seafood	Safer alternatives
Raw or smoked ready-to-eat e.g. oysters, sashimi or sushi, smoked salmon or trout, sandwich fillings, precooked peeled prawns such as in prawn cocktails and salads	All freshly cooked seafood. Use immediately or store any leftovers in fridge and use within a day of cooking
Eggs	Safer alternatives
Dishes and beverages containing raw egg that won't be cooked further e.g. homemade mayonnaise, tiramisu, aioli, while not a <i>Listeria</i> risk, can be a source of food poisoning	Cook egg dishes, such as quiche, to 72°C in the centre (or until the white is firm and the yolk thickens)



Reduce your risk with these food safety tips:

- Avoid refrigerated foods that are past their 'use by' date.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly and use within 24 hours, or freeze.
- Cook high risk foods such as poultry, minced meat, sausages, hamburgers.
- Cook leftovers to 75°C.
- Cook frozen fruit and vegetables.

For more information about listeriosis see:

- Healthdirect
- The Cancer Council has a range of useful publications for people with cancer, their family and friends.

Food Safety Information Council

The Food Safety Information Council is a health promotion charity with representatives of state and federal governments, food industry and professional associations. Membership is open to any organisation with an interest in promoting safe food handling practices for consumers.

We aim to reduce the over four million cases of food poisoning in Australia each year by educating consumers to handle food safely from the time it leaves the retailer until it appears on the plate.

We organise Food Safety Week each November as part of our campaign to pass on simple messages to improve consumers' knowledge of how to handle, store and cook food safely.

For more information:

Email: info@foodsafety.asn.au

Website: www.foodsafety.asn.au



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