

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. In some, however, food is known to cause severe disease including blood poisoning (septicaemia) or meningitis.
Older people and individuals with weakened immune systems, including those who have cancer, AIDS or those with dialysis, are at an especially high risk of developing Listeria, particularly meningitis or septicaemia and are presented as a 'red flag' disease which is not serious for the mother but can cause miscarriage, premature delivery, stillbirth or even death in a newborn child.

How do you get Listeria?
Listeria usually occurs after eating food contaminated with Listeria bacteria. It is not associated with transmission in most other ready-to-eat, refrigerated and processed foods. These include pre-prepared cooked and chilled ready-to-eat sandwiches, soft cheeses, cold cuts of meat, pâtés and smoked fish.
It is impossible to tell from 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 many animals, birds and fish.

How can I prevent Listeria infections?

- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, pork, or poultry
- Wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating
- Avoid unpasteurized cream cheese from vegetable and from smoked fish and ready-to-eat foods
- Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk or 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 avoid food safety or food handling facilities you adhere to food safety and infection control practices

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Listeria information sheet

Information and advice on Listeria.

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