

What foods should I avoid?

The foods of most concern are those that do not require any further cooking or reheating such as chilled ready-to-eat foods.

Foods most often associated with infection are ready-to-eat food from the fridge and processed foods such as pre-prepared cooked and chilled meals, soft cheeses, cold cuts of meat, pâtés and smoked fish.

The following foods have been associated with an increased risk of listeriosis:

- Raw unpasteurised milk and any drinks or ice-cream that use raw milk (such as smoothies)
- Soft cheeses with white rind (e.g. Brie, Camembert, goat's cheese)
- Blue-veined cheeses (e.g. Stilton, Roquefort, Gorgonzola)
- Ready-to-eat cooked meats or meat products
- Cured or fermented meats or meat products eaten without further cooking e.g. parma ham, salami
- Ready-to-heat meals
- Raw or smoked ready-to-eat fish, e.g. smoked salmon, smoked mackerel, sushi
- Ready-to-eat cooked crustacean meat e.g. crabmeat, lobster, prawn
- Live or cooked seafood e.g. oysters, mussels, scallops, clams
- Ready prepared pre-packed chopped salads e.g. leaves, sprouted seeds, coleslaw
- Prepared salad items loose from salad bars/deli e.g. coleslaw, potato salad
- Pre-packed sandwiches
- Any paté (including vegetarian)
- Precut/prepared fruit, e.g. melon, fruit salad
- Frozen vegetables eaten without further cooking

What should I do if I think I have Listeria?

For the majority of healthy adults and older children, listeria is not a significant problem. If infected, symptoms will be short lived and temporary.

However, if you are in one of the vulnerable groups and have concerns about symptoms or suspect you have eaten contaminated food, you should contact your GP or healthcare provider.



We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at the time of publication.

Reference: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/gastroenteric/listeriosis/factsheets/>

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PATIENT
INFORMATION
LEAFLET

Listeriosis & Food Safety:

Advice during Chemotherapy



What is Listeriosis?



Listeriosis is a rare but potentially serious infection caused by the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. On average each year, there are between 14 and 22 cases of listeriosis reported in Ireland.

Listeria monocytogenes is found in the environment in a variety of habitats including soil, vegetation, silage, sewage, water and faeces of healthy animals & humans. It causes a group of diseases which are collectively known as Listeriosis. The infection is usually caused by eating contaminated food. This is because it can survive and grow below normal temperatures in the fridge.

How do people get Listeriosis?

Eating contaminated food is the main cause of cases (80-90%). Infection can also be transmitted directly from infected animals to humans as well as between humans.

Who is affected by Listeriosis?

In healthy people, listeria infection (listeriosis) generally causes either no symptoms or only mild, self-limiting flu-like symptoms with, very occasionally, gastroenteritis. Mild infections like this only affect the lining of the gut.

More vulnerable people are at greater risk. The disease can become invasive and get into the bloodstream. Chemotherapy can interfere with the body's natural defense against infections and may be more susceptible to acquiring a food related infection during your treatment.

If you get a food-related infection during cancer treatment, it may be more serious and may take longer to recover.

How is Listeria diagnosed?

When severe infection is suspected, diagnosis is usually made by testing the patient's blood or cerebrospinal fluid (the fluid bathing the brain and spinal cord).

How is Listeria Treated?

Most cases of mild infection are simple short-lived illnesses and do not require any treatment.

Severe infections will require antibiotic treatment in hospital delivered directly into the bloodstream through a vein.

How can I protect myself?

Good food safety is particularly important if you are going through cancer treatment or caring for someone that is having treatment.

- Always wash your hands before and after preparing food, and before eating.
- Cook food thoroughly, especially meat and meat products, chicken and vegetables, and pre-prepared, ready-to-heat meals.
- Always make sure that food is cooked through to the middle and piping hot (food that requires cooking should reach 75°C for at least 30 seconds).
- Wash salads, fruit and raw vegetables thoroughly before eating, or peel if appropriate.
- Keep uncooked meats separate from vegetables and from cooked and ready-to-eat foods.
- Use separate boards and utensils for raw and ready to eat food. Wash hands, knives, and cutting boards after contact with uncooked food.
- Make sure that your fridge is working correctly (it should be kept between 0°C and 5°C).
- When heating food in a microwave, make sure you follow the heating and standing time instructions on the packaging.
- Keep foods for as short a time as possible and follow storage instructions including 'use by' dates.
- Throw away left-over reheated food.
- Cooked food which is not eaten immediately should be cooled as rapidly as possible and then stored in the fridge.
- Never put warm food in a fridge.