

Listeria - keeping food safe

What is listeria?

- *Listeria monocytogenes* (listeriosis) can cause severe and sometimes life-threatening food borne illness. It usually affects vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and people with weakened immunity, particularly those over 60.
- *Listeria monocytogenes* has been found in a range of chilled ready-to-eat foods such as pre-packed sandwiches, pate, butter, soft mould-ripened cheeses, cooked sliced meats and smoked salmon.
- This fact sheet highlights key control measures, which people involved in the preparation and supply of chilled ready-to-eat foods can take to minimise the risk of people developing listeriosis.

Minimising the risk of listeriosis.

Temperature Control

- Keep Chilled ready-to-eat food cold – at 5°C or below.
- Preparation of chilled ready-to-eat foods must be carried out without delay.
- Chilled Conditions must be maintained from production of food until serving. This includes the supply and distribution of foods.
- Chilled ready-to-eat foods should be eaten as soon as possible after serving. Leftovers should be disposed off.

Shelf-life

- All chilled ready-to-eat foods including sandwiches to be eaten as close to the date of production as possible.
- No foods should be eaten after their use by date.
- Bulk pre-packed foods, when opened, should be used within two days, unless the manufacturer's instructions state otherwise.
- Purchase chilled ready-to-eat foods from reputable suppliers only.

Further Information

- *Food Hygiene – A guide for business.* A general guide to the Food Hygiene Regulations: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/hygienebusinessguide.pdf>
- *Food safety management packs.* Practical guides to food safety management systems: <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/>
- *HPA listeria factsheet.* Further information on listeria and listeriosis: www.hpa.org.uk/listeriafactsheet