

Preventing Listeria Infection

Listeria infection is a bacterial infection that can cause serious illness or death in a small number of people in our community.

The most common source of Listeria infection is food containing the Listeria bacteria.

Who is at risk?

- Pregnant women and their unborn babies
- Some frail elderly people
- Anyone whose immune system has been weakened by long term disease, specific medical conditions or treatment with immunosuppressant drugs.

Example of these conditions include: cancer and chemotherapy, leukaemia, diabetes, liver or kidney disease, HIV/AIDS, organ transplantation, alcohol abuse and intravenous drug use

If you are unsure of your immune status check
with your doctor
or medical specialist

High Risk Foods

Foods that may contain the Listeria bacteria.

- **Pate**
- **Cooked diced chicken** eg sandwich filling
- **Cold meats** such as polony, ham and other processed meats
- **Soft Cheeses** such as brie, camembert, fetta and ricotta
- Self serve or packed salads
- Cold, smoked and raw seafood
- Soft serve ice cream and thickshakes

Note: All of the foods in **bold** may be made safe by following the instructions below.



What can I do to reduce the risk from high risk foods?

The *Listeria* bacteria is killed by normal cooking temperatures, so most high risk foods (eg. salami, ham, mortadella, cold chicken, cold casseroles/stews and other leftovers including chicken, pizza and yesterdays roast) can be made low risk for *Listeria* by following these instructions.

- Slice the food or put a small amount in a microwave oven, preheated convection oven, or in a pan on the stove.
- Reheat or cook until food is hotter than 70°C all the way through. The food must be steaming/boiling hot - too hot to eat immediately. This hot food is safe to **eat now** or you can cool it down in the fridge and eat it cold, providing you eat it **within 24 hours**. **After that throw it out.**
- Soft cheeses can be used in cooking if they also reach the temperatures listed above.
- Home made pate that is thoroughly cooked and consumed in less than 24 hours of cooking if stored safely in the fridge is also safe. **After that time throw it out!**

If you are unsure about any of the methods or food items mentioned above, contact one of the organisations listed below for more advice.

What foods are safer to consume?

- **Well washed fruit & vegetables** including the salad you have just made
- **Freshly cooked foods**
- **Tinned foods**
- **Breads & Cereals**
- **Dried food** such as nuts, fruit, beans
- **Pasteurised milk and milk products** such as hard cheeses, yoghurts, pasteurized dips and UHT products that are shelf stable
- **Takeaways, if steaming hot, safely prepared and stored** such as pizza, chicken, burgers without salad.

Your diet may not be as restricted as you may think if you follow these instructions:

EAT HOT

EAT FRESH

KEEP CLEAN

For more information contact:
Your Local Government Environmental Health Officer
or
The Food Unit,
Environmental Health Directorate
Department of Health

Phone: (08) 9388 4999
www.health.wa.gov.au/envirohealth/home
www.foostandards.gov.au