



Pregnant women are at high risk of contracting listeriosis



Raw seafood should be avoided by people at high risk of contracting listeriosis

What is Listeriosis?

Listeriosis is an infection which usually results from eating food contaminated with a bacteria called listeria. People at high risk of listeriosis are:

- Pregnant women,
- The elderly,
- People whose immune system is compromised (e.g. from cancer)
- People on medications such as prednisone or cortisone.

The early symptoms of listeriosis can include fever, headaches, tiredness, aches and pain. These can lead to more serious conditions including meningitis (brain infection) and septicaemia (blood poisoning). Listeriosis can be a particularly serious illness for pregnant women, putting them at high risk of miscarriage, premature birth or stillbirth.

How to reduce the risk of listeriosis

Listeriosis is easily treated with antibiotics, but prevention is best. Some foods are more easily contaminated by listeria than others. The following foods should be avoided by people at high risk of listeriosis:

- cold meats (ready to eat delicatessen meat)
- raw or smoked seafood (such as oysters, sashimi or smoked salmon), ready to eat peeled prawns
- cold cooked chicken
- pate
- soft, semi-soft and surface ripened cheeses (e.g. brie, camembert, ricotta, feta and blue cheese) – these are safe if served cooked and hot
- soft serve ice cream
- Unpasteurised dairy foods (note: almost all dairy foods produced must be pasteurised).

The following guidelines can also help to reduce your risk of listeriosis:

- eat freshly cooked or freshly prepared foods
- avoid foods that are past their 'use by' or 'best before' date
- cook foods thoroughly (heating food kills listeria)
- reheat foods to steaming hot (eat refrigerated leftovers within 48 hours)
- ask for salads and sandwiches to be freshly prepared at cafes
- only buy ready to eat hot food if it is steaming hot
- order hot meals if eating out.

When you handle and prepare food you should take care to:

- wash your hands before preparing food and after handling raw foods
- wash raw fruit and vegetables well before eating
- use different chopping boards and knives for cooked foods to those used for raw foods unless they have been washed in warm, soapy water



Using different chopping boards for raw & cooked foods can help prevent food being contaminated by listeria



Discard any foods that are past their 'use by' date

- defrost food by placing it on the lower shelves of the fridge or use a microwave.

When you store food, you should:

- keep food covered
- place cooked food in the fridge within one hour of cooking
- put raw meat, poultry and fish below cooked or ready-to-eat food in the fridge to prevent drips that could contaminate pre-prepared food
- keep your fridge clean.

Put what you've learnt into practice.....

1. Are you at high risk of listeriosis?
2. If you are at risk, do you usually eat any of the foods that are more readily contaminated by listeria?
3. Who prepares the meals in your home? Are they aware of the more easily contaminated foods and of how to safely prepare and store those foods?

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