

LISTERIA

What is it?

An infection caused by the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*, which is commonly found in vegetation, water, soil, dust, mud and sewage. It is also found in the faeces of humans and animals, so it is difficult to avoid!

What are the symptoms?

In the general population there may be no symptoms at all or there may be mild 'flu-like' symptoms. Those most at risk are the very young, the elderly, pregnant mothers and those already suffering illnesses. They may suffer from severe symptoms of fever, headache, sickness and diarrhoea. The symptoms may develop in anything from 3 to 70 days, on average it is usually about 3 weeks

How long does it last?

The illness may last for 7-10 days depending on the individual

What are the causes?

Unpasteurised milk, soft cheese made from unpasteurised milk, contaminated vegetables and cook chill ready to eat meals which require heating

What can I do to prevent passing it on?

If you are ill pay particular attention to personal hygiene, always wash your hands after visiting the toilet and before handling food.

What should I do to prevent getting it?

- Take chilled and frozen food home quickly, preferably in a coolbag or box
- Prepare and store raw and cooked food separately, raw should be stored below cooked
- Check your fridge temperature, it should be 5C or below
- Check use-by-dates
- Do not eat undercooked meat or poultry products
- Cooked food should never be reheated more than once, throw away any leftovers
- Ensure food which is cooked or reheated in the microwave is piping hot, follow manufacturers instructions and recommended standing times
- Always wash foods which are to be eaten raw, such as fruit, salad and vegetables
- Pregnant women have been advised to avoid blue veined and soft cheeses and any meat based pate as they could contain high levels of the bacteria