



Food Safety Article-*Advice on Listeria*

While Listeria infection is uncommon and causes few or no symptoms in most people, it can be very dangerous for unborn or newborn babies, the sick or elderly.

However, listeriosis is usually caused by people at risk eating food that has not been stored or handled properly once the food has been produced or cooked.



Listeria bacteria are found widely in nature and may be present in certain types of foods, such as pre-prepared uncooked foods or pre-cooked foods which have been kept for some time after they have been cooled down (*p. 7 AHIE Ed. 91*)

For those of you working in this high risk category it is important to reduce the risk of Listeria.

Ensure when preparing or purchasing foods, that the food is freshly prepared and well washed, Follow good food hygiene practices by

- Washing and drying hands prior to any food preparation
- Cook foods thoroughly
- Refrigerate leftovers immediately and keep them for no more than a day
- Be particularly careful with processed meats & ready to eat salads
- Make sure that the reheated meats are steaming hot and served hot
- Choose alternatives to soft cheeses.



Those with poor immune systems (Elderly or pregnant *-although in recent times, we may even say "or both!"*) can now obtain advised by brochure from their Local GP or information obtained from the FZANZ Standards, giving examples of foods to avoid: This information can be obtained on FSANZ website www.foodstandards.gov.au

It is often a question I am asked, if sanitising ready to eat fruit and vegetables is required.

Unless purchasing organic produce (that would still require thorough washing) there may be traces of bacteria on unwashed fruit and vegetables from fertiliser, dirt, chemicals, herbicides and pesticides. To be sure these bacteria are removed it is paramount that all fruit and vegetables are thoroughly washed prior to preparation and cooking. Being cooked would pose less risk than prepared for ready to eat produce without a cooking or peeling procedure.

It is in the handling and preparation of uncooked produce that is also a concern so much so that many food safety programs now state to use a sanitiser for uncooked &unpeeled product. Some proprietors are using 50ppm of chlorine, while others in the industry have chosen to use a Non-Toxic type.

Your chemicals supplier will guide you with the correct sanitiser and dilution that best suits your catering facility. You also need to consider the correct use of chopping boards, gloves, storage and personal hygiene practices to ensure the food remains safe *"all the time"*.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marjorie Harvey".

Marjorie Harvey
Australian Food Hygiene Services
Director of Training, Clients Services
Class 1, 3rd Party Food safety Auditor
Phone: 03 9779 3626
Mobile: 041 612 1664
Fax: 03 0720 0225
Email: marjharvey@optusnet.com.au