

Look out for listeria

The number of cases of listeria in people over 60 has doubled in the past nine years. And one in three of the people who get food poisoning caused by listeria die as a result.

Listeria is a type of food poisoning bacteria that can live and grow in food - and it's chilled food in particular where you need to be careful, for example pâté, cooked sliced meats, soft cheeses and smoked fish.

You might already know that pregnant women need to avoid certain foods because they can contain listeria, but the fact is that anyone over the age of 60 is also at a higher risk from listeria. The same is true for anyone who is ill or who has a long-term medical condition.



Check listeria

- Don't use food past its 'use by' date.
- Make sure your fridge is between 0°C and 5°C (32°F and 41°F).
- Follow the storage instructions on food labels.

Listeria can be a killer for people over 60. So take a closer look before you prepare your food and stay safe.

For more information about listeria and preparing food safely, go online to eatwell.gov.uk/listeria

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**If you're over 60,
a closer look
in the kitchen could
save your life**



**Look closely at your
food labels to avoid
life-threatening listeria**



How to avoid listeria

You just need to take a closer look at these three things:

1. The 'use by' date

You will see 'use by' dates on food that goes off quickly. Given the chance, listeria bacteria will grow rapidly in your food, so make sure you store it in the fridge and eat, cook or freeze it by the 'use by' date shown on the label.

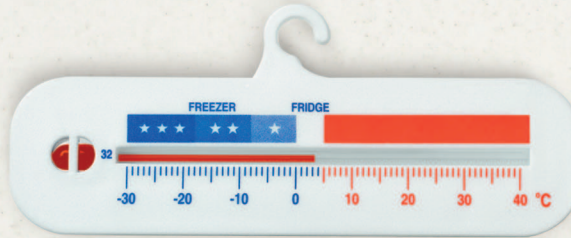
Even if the food looks and smells fine, using it after the 'use by' date could put your health at risk. Don't take the chance, throw it out.

KILLER FACT:

Listeria food poisoning can kill.
Avoid the risk of life-threatening listeria – take a good look at the label and don't use food that's past its 'use by' date.



And remember, the 'use by' date is different from the 'best before' date, which you'll also see on some food labels. The 'best before' date is more about the quality of the food than its safety. Once food is past its 'best before' date it doesn't mean it will make you ill, but you might find that it starts to lose its flavour and texture.



2. The temperature of your fridge

Make sure your fridge is cold enough because this will help stop food poisoning bacteria like listeria from growing in your food. Your fridge should be between 0°C and 5°C (32°F and 41°F).

If you're not sure how the temperature setting or dial works on your fridge, you could use a fridge thermometer to check it's the right temperature.

3. The storage instructions for your food

Food that goes off quickly usually has storage instructions on the label that say how long you can keep the food and whether it needs to go in the fridge.

This sort of food often has special packaging to help keep it fresh for longer. But, once you open it, the food will go off quickly.

This is why the storage instructions also tell you how long the food will keep once the packaging has been opened. For example, you might see 'eat within 2 days of opening' on the label.

You can keep some foods for longer if you freeze them, as long as you freeze them before the 'use by' date.

Always check and follow any storage instructions on the label carefully.

