

# Update on listeria cases being investigated

The Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland are continuing to investigate foods linked to listeria infections in hospitals.

There continues to only be cases in England.

All products linked to the cases have been withdrawn and food chain investigations continue.

Listeria is widespread in the environment and can contaminate a range of foods. However, all reported cases of listeria linked to food production are fully investigated to ensure public safety is being protected.

Low levels of listeria are legally permitted in some foods. The risk to the general population is low and infections are rare.

To date, all of the cases linked to this incident have involved people from vulnerable groups in healthcare organisations who were being treated for existing medical conditions.

North Country Quality Foods, which supplies meats produced by North Country Cooked Meats, took action once a link was confirmed to withdraw products that might pose a risk of listeria infection. This withdrawal notification instructed businesses not to use the food or distribute it further. North Country Cooked Meats and North Country Quality Foods both remain closed.

The Good Food Chain, who were supplied with ingredients from North Country Cooked Meats, has withdrawn all products from hospitals and other businesses and has ceased production.

Dr Colin Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer at the FSA said:

'Our sympathies remain with the families of the patients who have tragically passed away.

'We have taken action along with local authorities to minimise the risk based on the evidence so far.

'The FSA will continue to investigate the cause of the outbreak to prevent a reoccurrence.'

This story is an update to a [previous story published on 7 June 2019](#).

Further case information from Public Health England is available [here](#).

## Information on Listeriosis

Listeriosis is a rare infection and for most people it goes unnoticed or there are mild symptoms of gastroenteritis that usually last a short time without the need for treatment.

The time between exposure to the organism and the development of the illness can be up to 70 days.

Occasionally, however, a more serious infection develops and spreads to the blood stream or brain. This can happen in people who have serious underlying health conditions and can also occur in pregnant women. Pregnant women and people with underlying health conditions can find more information on the [NHS website](#).

The best way to prevent listeriosis is to practice good food hygiene. We advise that chilled food should be put in a fridge or other suitable equipment as soon as it is delivered. Food that is required to be chilled is not permitted to be left out of temperature control for long periods of time.

Food products are permitted to be out of temperature control for limited periods, providing there is no risk to food safety, to accommodate the practicalities of transport and storage.