

FSA and UKHSA warn of the possible presence of E-coli in various Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese

FSA and UKHSA are warning the public not to eat four of Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese which has been recalled as a precaution because they may be contaminated with a specific type of E.coli bacteria called Shiga toxin producing E. coli, also known as STEC or VTEC, a pathogen that can cause food poisoning.

The four cheeses are:

- Mrs Kirkham's Mild & Creamy Lancashire
- Mrs Kirkham's Tasty Lancashire
- Mrs Kirkham's Mature Lancashire
- Mrs Kirkham's Smoked Lancashire

Symptoms caused by STEC organisms include severe diarrhoea (including bloody diarrhoea), abdominal pain, and sometimes haemolytic uremic syndrome, (HUS), a serious condition that can lead to kidney failure and can be fatal.

STEC infection can be spread by many different routes, including the consumption of contaminated food or water, by direct contact with an infected animal or its environment and also through close contact with an infected person. It is therefore not uncommon for this infection to spread from an infected person to other people living in the same household or in settings such as nurseries.

The cheeses are sometimes served as part of a hamper, as individual portions or can be purchased as a gift set or block, so it may not always be clear whether you have purchased an affected product.

If in doubt, consumers are advised to contact the retailer they bought their cheese from to find out if it is from the businesses and batches affected. In the meantime, do not eat the cheese and ensure it is stored safely, fully wrapped and not in contact with other foods.

If you have purchased any recalled products, it is important that you:

- Do not eat the product
- Thoroughly clean any surfaces, utensils and equipment the cheese may have touched to prevent cross-contamination of other foods and drink
- Make sure that fridges are kept at the right temperature - five degrees Celsius (5°C) or below - as this will limit the growth of any harmful bacteria. Given the fullness of fridges at this time of year it is particularly important to check this.

Tina Potter, Head of Incidents at the Food Standards Agency said:

“We are aware that this recalled product may be popular over the festive period, especially as it has been sold as part of a Christmas gift hamper and so we are urging consumers to check whether they have bought or been gifted this product.

“Due to this outbreak of E. coli O145 we are urging all consumers to ensure they follow the advice in the product recall notices, which details all of the products which may pose a risk:

[Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese Ltd recalls Lancashire Cheese because of possible contamination with E. Coli | Food Standards Agency.](#)

“We are also asking people to share this advice with friends and family who may have either purchased the recalled product or have received it as a gift.”

Amy Douglas, Incident Director for Gastrointestinal Infections and Food Safety Division at UKHSA, said:

“There have been at least 30 confirmed cases of this specific outbreak strain of STEC in the UK.

“Symptoms of STEC include severe diarrhoea (including bloody diarrhoea), stomach cramps, vomiting and fever. If you have diarrhoea and vomiting, you can take steps to avoid passing it on to family and friends over the festive period.

“Washing your hands with soap and warm water and using bleach-based products to clean surfaces will help stop infections from spreading. Don’t prepare food for others if you have symptoms or for 48 hours after symptoms stop.

“Many of us will be travelling for Christmas, but if you are unwell you should avoid visiting people in hospitals and care homes to avoid passing on the infection in these settings. Do not return to work or school once term restarts, until 48 hours after your symptoms have stopped.”

It is important that businesses follow the product withdrawal and recalls undertaken, and if they have received the product, ensure good hygiene practice to prevent the risk of cross-contamination – it is possible that other cheese, if handled using the same equipment or on common surfaces, may have also been contaminated and therefore affected.

The FSA and UKHSA continue to work closely together and with local authorities in response to this outbreak and further recalls may be undertaken if any more products are found to be affected.

For more details of which batches of cheese may be affected see the Product Recall Information Notice on food.gov.uk.

[Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese Ltd recalls Lancashire Cheese because of possible contamination with E. Coli | Food Standards Agency](#)