

Anisakis

What is anisakis and how to detect it in fish and fishery products.

What is anisakis

Anisakis is a food-borne parasite which infects finfish, and cephalopod molluscs such as squid. Eating seafood contaminated with anisakis can cause human illness or allergic reactions in some people. Symptoms can include abdominal pain and nausea.

Requirements for fish and fishery products

Your business must ensure that fishery products have been checked visually for parasites (visual examination) before they are placed on the market. Fishery products that are obviously contaminated with parasites must not be placed on the market for human consumption.

Hygiene requirements for fishery products are set out in:

- Annex III, Section VIII of [assimilated Regulation \(EC\) No. 853/2004](#) for England and Wales
- Annex III, Section VIII of [Regulation \(EC\) No. 853/2004](#) for Northern Ireland

Methods for anisakis detection

Detailed rules relating to visual inspections can be found in:

- [assimilated Regulation \(EC\) 2074/2005](#) for England and Wales
- [Regulation \(EC\) 2074/2005](#) for Northern Ireland

However, there are alternative methods for the detection of anisakis larvae in fish and fishery products:

1. [Artificial digestion method](#)
2. [UV-press method](#)
3. [Sequencing analysis \(PDF\)](#)

In its former capacity as a National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for Anisakis, the Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) completed a training workshop hosted by the Institute of Marine Research in Norway. The [subsequent report](#) highlights the logistics required to implement the UV press method and the elements of the process which need to be specifically covered in quality assurance documentation.

Further information on anisakis testing methodology is available from the [EU Reference Laboratory for Parasites](#). The NRL for parasites for NI is Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the Republic of Ireland

Prevalence of anisakis in Europe

Cefas conducted a [literature review to determine prevalence of anisakis in European fish and fishery products](#). The review identified that the distribution of Anisakis species depends on many variable factors such as seasonal fluctuations and the types and sizes of the fish sampled.

Further guidance

Further guidance is available for food business operators on [freezing fish and fishery products](#).