

## Listeria infection, patient information

### Why have I received this information?

Tests have shown that you have a listeria infection.

### What is listeria?

Listeria is a bacterium that is common in our environment, including in water and soil. Listeria is sometimes found in certain foods. Both humans and animals can be carriers of the listeria bacterium without being sick.

The time from becoming infected to illness (incubation period) is 3–21 days. It can also be longer, up to 3 months. It can therefore often be difficult to find the source of infection.

It is most commonly people with a weakened immune system who can become seriously ill with listeria and suffer from blood poisoning or meningitis. The elderly, newborns, pregnant women and people treated with medicines that affect the immune system are at particularly high risk of serious illness. A listeria infection is treated with antibiotics.

### How is listeria transmitted?

Listeria is not transmitted between people. The exception is a pregnant woman, who can transmit the infection to the foetus via the placenta. Listeria can be spread from animals or through infected food. The most common source of infection is via food.

The bacterium survives freezing and grows at refrigerator temperature, but dies when heated to at least 70°C.

Food stored for a long time in the refrigerator and then eaten without being reheated is therefore a particular risk. This applies to, for example:

- various meat products, primarily charcuterie products such as ham and sausages
- fish (cold smoked or raw marinated)
- soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk.

Listeria is not found in hard cheese.

The bacterium can also be found in frozen vegetables. If the vegetables are only thawed without heating and then left in the fridge, the bacterium can grow. It can also grow in melon that is sliced and left in the fridge.

### What should I do to prevent others from getting infected?

To prevent more people from getting sick, it is important to try to find the source of the infection. Think about whether you have eaten any of the foods that spread the disease. Keep leftovers in the fridge if you can. Leftover food can then be examined to try to trace the source of the infection.

### More information

[Folkhälsomyndigheten och Smittskyddsläkarföreningens samlade information om smittsamma sjukdomar | Folkhälsomyndigheten \(folkhalsomyndigheten.se\)](#)

[Listeria monocytogenes | Livsmedelsverket \(livsmedelsverket.se\)](#)

### About the infection prevention sheet

The infection prevention sheet has been produced by the Swedish Association of County Medical Officers, and is valid nationally.