

**“ Over a quarter of the
salads served with
takeaway meals tested
during a recent survey
were found to contain
unsatisfactory levels of
bacteria ”**

- Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cumbria Food Safety Officers

The information in this leaflet has been provided by Food Safety Officers in Greater Manchester and, Lancashire, and the Food and Environmental Microbiology Services North West Laboratory at Preston.



For advice or further information contact:

- The Food Safety Team at your local council
- The Food Standards Agency (www.foodstandards.gov.uk)

Food Safety Leaflet

Salads served with takeaway meals



Co-ordinated Survey

Between May to December 2006, Food Safety Officers from 26 local authorities collected 297 salad samples from takeaway outlets across Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cumbria. The salads were sent to the Food and Environmental Microbiology Services North West laboratory at Preston or Carlisle for microbiological examination.

Results

The total number of bacteria in 28% of the salads was found to be unsatisfactory. This suggests poor standards of hygiene and temperature control or inadequate stock rotation in the takeaways serving the food.

The bacteria *E. coli* was detected in 18 salads.

Two samples contained *Staphylococcus aureus*. This is often found on the hands and in the nose or ears, and indicates poor standards of hygiene among staff preparing or serving the food.

One salad was found to contain potentially hazardous levels of the food poisoning bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Action

All of the premises which served unsatisfactory food have been subject to follow-up action by Food Safety Officers from their local authority.

***Staphylococcus aureus* is a bug which causes violent food poisoning symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhoea.**

***Listeria monocytogenes* is especially dangerous if consumed by pregnant women as it may cause still birth.**

To keep salads safe, food businesses should follow these simple guidelines:

- Wash hands thoroughly before preparing or touching the salad.
- Thoroughly wash salad ingredients to remove soil or other contamination.
- To prevent cross contamination of bacteria, prepare salad on a clean cutting board and away from surfaces or equipment used for raw meat.
- Use different cutting boards and utensils for raw and ready to eat foods.
- Make sure there is a stock rotation system in place. Ideally prepare fresh salad every day.
- Keep prepared salad in the fridge and only remove small quantities when they are needed.
- Make sure the fridges are working properly. The food safety regulations require a temperature of 8°C or colder, however if possible they should be adjusted to operate at between 0 and 5°C.
- Do not leave prepared salad at room temperature for long periods of time. After 4 hours throw it away. Do not put it back in the fridge.
- Serve salad using clean utensils not with your hands.
- Do not “top-up” containers with more salad. Serve fresh salad from a clean container.
- Include salad preparation in your written food safety procedures. Useful information is included in the Food Standards Agency guide; “Safe Food Better Business”