

Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester,
Lancashire and Merseyside
Food Safety Officers

The information in this leaflet has been provided by Food Safety Officers in Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside and the Food and Environmental Microbiology Services North West Laboratories at Carlisle, Chester and Preston.

**“ In a recent survey,
9% of raw filleted fish at
retail were found to
contain
“
*Listeria monocytogenes***



Food Safety Leaflet

Raw filleted fish from retail



- Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside Food Safety Officers

For advice or further information contact:

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

Co-ordinated Survey

During June 2007 local authorities across Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire and North Wales took part in a co-ordinated sampling exercise to determine the prevalence of harmful bacteria in raw filleted fish on retail sale. A total of 117 samples were taken which included 23 different types of fish.

Results

9% of samples examined were contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*, and 6% of the samples contained *Listeria innocua*.

Listeriosis is a rare but potentially life-threatening disease. Healthy adults are likely to experience only mild infection, causing flu-like symptoms or stomach upsets. However, listeria infection can occasionally lead to severe blood poisoning or meningitis. It is particularly dangerous in pregnancy as although the illness is unlikely to be serious for the mother, it can cause miscarriage, premature delivery or severe illness in a newborn child

Vibrio fluvialis was isolated from one Pacific cod sample. This type of *Vibrio* species has been implicated in foodborne disease and associated with acute diarrhoeal illness in humans.

Although the fish is made safe for consumption by normal cooking procedures, the presence of these organisms in the raw product emphasises the need for good hygiene standards to prevent cross contamination to ready to eat foods served at the same counter.

Action

Retailers to be made aware of the potential risks from this type of product.

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

To ensure that cross contamination does not occur on raw fish counters, retailers should follow these simple guidelines:

- It is important that the same food hygiene/safety procedures are applied for raw fish as for raw meats.
- Use separate utensils and serving equipment for raw and ready to eat fish products.
- Make sure that raw and ready to eat products are displayed separately to avoid cross contamination
- Ensure that all staff wash their hands thoroughly after handling raw fish.
- Make sure there is a good stock rotation system in place as *Listeria* can grow at fridge temperatures