

STS
food safety

LISTERIOSIS INFORMATION FOR HOSPITAL CATERERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC



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Employment Law • Health & Safety • Food Safety • Occupational Health
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INTRODUCTION

Here at STS we understand just how challenging times are for hospital caterers right now. We also understand that the current demand on your services, combined with the effects of the pandemic, may present increased risks to food safety, particularly as the outbreak progresses.

We've put together some useful tips to help you make sure you can continue to protect your vulnerable customers from Listeriosis during this time.

SUPPLIER CREDENTIALS

As the pandemic progresses, it might become more challenging to purchase your higher risk foods (such as pre-packed sandwiches, salads or cooked meats) from your usual supplier. If you need to purchase from an alternative supplier, you'll need to make sure you check their credentials so you can be confident you're buying from a reliable, safe source, just as you usually would.

Ensure any alternative suppliers you use for higher risk foods are able to provide suitable 3rd party certification (such as STS Certification) to demonstrate they follow and maintain appropriate food safety standards.

MAINTAINING THE COLD CHAIN

It's vitally important for consumer safety to keep chilled, higher risk foods cold **throughout** the food's journey to the customer. You should continue to ensure higher risk foods (such as sandwiches, salads and cooked meats) are maintained between 0-5°C from point of supply right through to service to your patients and customers. Remember, the '4-hour rule' is not suitable for use in a hospital setting.

Key risk areas for higher risk food temperatures in hospitals are during transportation to wards and ward service – these foods must be maintained at 0-5°C, right up to point of service to the consumer, and they shouldn't be left out of refrigeration if the patient isn't ready to eat. Temperature controls in ward kitchens need to be as tightly maintained as in the main kitchens.

Also, don't forget to have robust procedures in place for the provision of higher risk foods during 'out of hours' periods.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Maintaining high standards of cleaning & disinfection is very important at this time. You should continue to ensure regular 2-stage cleaning & disinfection is maintained, and that food contact equipment & utensils are cleaned by heat/in a dishwasher following the manufacturer's instructions. Remember to make sure your chemical disinfectants meet either BS EN 1276 or BS EN 13697 as these are effective against *Listeria monocytogenes*.

With regard to disinfectants effective against Covid-19, please follow current government/NHS guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wn-cov-guidance-for-primary-care/wn-cov-interim-guidance-for-primary-care#environmental-cleaning-following-a-possible-case>

CONTAMINATION CONTROLS

Ensure you maintain your usual high standard of contamination control, both in terms of separation of raw/unwashed and ready to eat foods and in terms of washing produce.

You should also try to maintain social distancing of 2m from your colleagues wherever possible and don't forget to make sure you restrict visitor access to your food handling areas as much as possible. Any contractors undertaking essential repairs during the outbreak should be health screened and maintain social distancing.

STAFFING / TRAINING

This is probably the area that is most likely to be impacted during the outbreak and which could have a significant effect on food safety. You may be in a position where, due to staff absence through self-isolation or sickness, you need to take on new staff at very short notice who have less experience in food safety than usual or who may not understand the specific risks associated with hospital catering. Any new staff need to be both fit to work and instructed/supervised/trained in controls for *Listeria monocytogenes*.

OTHER FOOD PATHWAYS

Remember, higher risk foods can find their way to vulnerable patients through other pathways, not just via ward service, so it's important to remember that suitable controls also need to be in place in dining rooms and in on-site retailers, etc.

LISTERIOSIS GUIDANCE

Make sure you are following the Food Standards Agency's current listeriosis guidance to help prevent an outbreak of foodborne illness at this challenging time.

LISTERIA SUPPORT / E-LEARNING

If you feel you or your team need further training on Listeria and its control, we have just launched a new Listeria e-learning course. Just give us a call or drop us an email if you're interested in purchasing licences for this dynamic new course.

FURTHER SUPPORT

We also want to assure you that **we are here for you** and, for the duration of the pandemic, can offer you free access to our Food Safety Helpline. If you have any food safety concerns you would like to discuss with us or simply would like some reassurance, please give us a call on 01252 728300 or email us at info@sts-solutions.co.uk



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