Fan of bagged salad leaves? It could give you salmonella

[http://i2.wp.com/metrouk2.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/15195830_1143942765719873_6648834025124344365_o.jpg?crop=0px%2C0px%2C1112px%2C1112px&resize=150%2C150&quality=80&strip=all&ssl=1&w=40&h=40](http://metro.co.uk/author/ashitha-nagesh-for-metro-co-uk/)

[Ashitha Nagesh for Metro.co.uk](http://metro.co.uk/author/ashitha-nagesh-for-metro-co-uk/)Friday 18 Nov 2016 7:43 pm

**Eating bagged salad could leave you at greater risk of contracting salmonella.**

Juice from damaged, broken leaves inside the bags can boost growth of the food poisoning bug more than 2,400-fold, scientists have found.

It also has the effect of making the bacteria more virulent, and therefore more likely to cause an infection.

Experts are now warning people to avoid ready cut salad wherever possible – but if you do eat bagged salad, wash it thoroughly and don’t let it get warm.

Researchers carried out tests on cos, baby green oak and red romaine lettuce, spinach, and red chard bought from commercially available bag mixes.

The study’s lead scientist, Dr Primrose Freestone from the University of Leicester, said: ‘Salad leaves are cut during harvesting and we found that even microlitres of the juice (less than 1/200th of a teaspoon) which leach from the cut ends of the leaves enabled salmonella to grow in water, even when it was refrigerated.

‘These juices also helped the salmonella to attach itself to the salad leaves so strongly that vigorous washing could not remove the bacteria, and even enabled the pathogen to attach to the salad bag container.

‘This strongly emphasises the need for salad leaf growers to maintain high food safety standards as even a few salmonella cells in a salad bag at the time of purchase could become many thousands by the time a bag of salad leaves reaches its use by date, even if kept refrigerated.

‘Even small traces of juices released from damaged leaves can make the pathogen grow better and become more able to cause disease.’

She added that people should eat bagged salad as soon as possible after it’s been opened, because ‘once opened, the bacteria naturally present on the leaves also grew much faster even when kept cold in the fridge’.

Every year more than 500,000 cases of food poisoning are reported in the UK, according to the Food Standards Agency.

Poultry meat is the most common source of infection, but some 48,000 cases were linked to non-meat products.

A spokesman for the FSA said: ‘Salmonella is not a problem regularly linked with bagged salads – there has only been one incident reported to the Food Standards Agency in the past five years.

‘We work with producers and manufacturers who apply stringent controls on the leafy salad supply chain in the UK, minimising potential for contamination and providing for food safety assurance.’

The findings have been published in the journal Applied and Environmental Microbiology.

Read more: <http://metro.co.uk/2016/11/18/fan-of-bagged-salad-leaves-it-could-give-you-salmonella-6267920/#ixzz4Waa18ZlM>