

WELLNESSMONTHLY

Preventing Foodborne Illness | November 2018



The Food and Drug Administration supports a [FoodKeeper app](#) with guidance on safe storage and when to discard certain foods.

Preventing the Misery of Food Poisoning

The approaching holiday season provides an annual wake-up call on the importance of safe food handling at home, work and social gatherings.

The U.S. has one of the safest food supply chains in the world, but contamination still occurs. Sometimes safe food becomes unsafe when we don't store or prepare it properly, or it is touched by someone who is ill.

Illness Prevention

No matter what you are doing, frequently washing hands and surfaces with warm water and soap is recommended because it helps reduce the spread of germs. While cooking, produce should be rinsed in fresh, clean water to remove dirt and other residue.

Other food safety tips:

1. Keep perishable foods cold before cooking.
2. Separate raw meats and fish from other ingredients.
3. Cook food at recommended temperatures.
4. Transfer foods from prep surfaces/platters to clean serving dishes.
5. Store cold foods at 40°F or lower and hot foods at 140°F or higher.
6. When transporting foods, use insulated coolers or warmers.
7. Immediately refrigerate leftovers in sealed containers.
8. Discard food left out in the "danger zone" (40°F-140°F) after two hours.
9. Don't prepare food for others if you or a family member are ill.
10. Resist the temptation to taste-test with your fingers or off cooking utensils.

Is It Foodborne Illness?

Foodborne illness is often referred to as food poisoning or stomach flu, which is viral gastroenteritis, not the type of influenza that flu shots help prevent. Foodborne illnesses usually resolve by themselves, but some conditions are serious and require hospitalization.

Symptoms may appear within hours or days of exposure. Common symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, fever and chills. When a chemical is consumed, symptoms may include headache, tingling or numbness, blurred vision, weakness, dizziness, and in serious cases, paralysis.

If You Get Sick

If you have foodborne illness symptoms, rest and drink plenty of fluids. You can replenish lost fluids and electrolytes with an oral rehydration solution. Sports drinks are not considered adequate for the treatment of diarrheal illness. Preparations of bismuth subsalicylate may help reduce the duration and severity of simple diarrhea.

Consult a health care professional for:

- Fever of 101.5°F or higher
- Blood in stool
- Prolonged vomiting
- Decrease in urination, dry mouth and throat, feeling dizzy
- Diarrheal illness that lasts more than three days

Once you regain your appetite, reintroduce bland foods. Soups, smoothies and water-rich fruits and vegetables help promote rehydration. Don't be surprised if you develop an aversion to food or beverages you consumed before developing symptoms. It's your body and brain telling you to avoid what made you sick.

Did You Know?

- **There are at least 250 identifiable foodborne diseases.**
- **Food can contain pathogens (bacteria, viruses or parasites), toxins or chemicals.**
- **An estimated 48 million cases of foodborne illness occur annually in the U.S.**

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SAFETY

Wash Fruits and Vegetables

Wash or scrub fruits and vegetables under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking. You don't need to wash them if their package says "prewashed."



Diarrhea or vomiting can cause dehydration if you lose more body fluids and salts (electrolytes) than you can retain. Symptoms of dehydration include a decrease in urination, dry mouth and throat, and feeling lightheaded or dizzy.

The root cause of foodborne illness often eludes detection. In cases affecting an identifiable population, public health officials investigate to determine the source of illness. If you believe you or a family member have been exposed, report the incident to your local or state health department. This helps prevent disease outbreaks.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the most commonly encountered foodborne germs in the U.S. are norovirus, salmonella, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Campylobacter* and staph (*Staphylococcus aureus*). Contact with the following occurs less frequently and is more likely to cause serious illness: *Clostridium botulinum* (botulism), *listeria*, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and *vibrio*.

Sources of illness vary. For example, norovirus is often linked to raw produce, contaminated water or shellfish, and infected food handlers. Salmonella is associated with contaminated eggs, poultry, meat, raw fruits and vegetables, and unpasteurized milk, juice and cheese.

Remember that pregnant women, infants and young children, the elderly and people with weak immune systems are particularly susceptible to foodborne germs.