

# Be Food Safe



## REPORT FOODBORNE ILLNESS

Most people don't think about food safety until they or someone they know gets sick from contaminated foods or beverages. It can happen to anyone. It is important to report foodborne illness to prevent the spread of illness to others.

Foodborne illness, sometimes called food poisoning, is a common, costly - yet preventable - public health problem. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases.

The most common foodborne illnesses are Norovirus, Salmonella, Clostridium perfringens, and Campylobacter. Common symptoms of foodborne illness are diarrhea and/or vomiting, typically lasting 1 to 7 days. Other symptoms might include abdominal cramps, nausea, fever, joint/back aches and fatigue. These illnesses can cause organ failure, long-term health problems or death. When young children, pregnant women, older adults and people with weakened immune systems consume contaminated foods or beverages, they are at a greater risk of becoming severely ill.

Reporting illnesses to your local public health agency helps them identify potential foodborne disease outbreaks. By investigating foodborne disease outbreaks, public health officials hope to prevent others from getting ill and also learn how to prevent similar outbreaks from occurring in the future. Problems may be identified at a local establishment during preparation, or food production or distribution.

You will be asked to provide information regarding your symptoms, where you ate or purchased groceries before your illness began and the foods and beverages you consumed.

Foodborne diseases are largely preventable. Many outbreaks result from food being contaminated when it is being prepared or served by a food worker with unwashed or improperly washed hands. Scientific evidence shows that preventing illness begins with basics. Wash your hands thoroughly, with soap and water, before and after handling food. It can prevent illness and even death.

Measures are needed to prevent or limit contamination all the way from the farm to the table.

**Everyone is at risk for foodborne illness.  
There are things you can do to protect  
yourself and your family from food poisoning.**

**Clean** – Illness causing bacteria can survive in many places around your kitchen, including your hands, utensils and cutting boards. Washing your hands for 20 seconds with soap and running water is one of the most important steps you can take. Wash your hands before, during, and after preparing food; before eating food; before and after treating a cut or wound; after using the toilet; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; and after touching garbage. Also clean equipment, utensils and countertops. Wash raw fruits and vegetables under running water.

**Separate** – Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in the shopping cart, grocery bag and refrigerator. Use separate cutting boards for produce and meats. Never place cooked foods on a plate that was used for raw food without cleaning. Always start with clean equipment and hands.

**Cook** – Cook to the right temperature. While many people think they can tell when food is “done” simply by checking its color and texture, there is no way to be sure food has reached the safe minimum cooking temperature without using a food thermometer. **Check here** for additional information on appropriate cooking temperatures.

**Chill** – Refrigerate promptly. Illness causing bacteria can grow in many foods within two hours unless you refrigerate them. Keep your refrigerator below 40°F. Never thaw frozen foods at room temperature.

Don't prepare food for others if you are ill, especially with symptoms of diarrhea and/or vomiting.

**Be especially careful preparing food for young children, pregnant women, those in poor health and older adults.**

To reduce your risk, educate yourself and your family on food safety issues. For example, do not eat or drink food containing raw eggs or **raw (unpasteurized) milk**.

**Report suspected illness from food to your  
local public health agency or the Department  
of Health and Senior Services at 866-628-9891.**