

If I have food poisoning what should I do at home?

- Regularly wash your hands in warm soapy water
- Do not prepare food
- Soiled bedding and clothing should be washed on a hot cycle
- If you have more than one toilet in the house dedicate one toilet that only you can use.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Use separate towels
- Stay at home until the infection has cleared

How can I prevent food poisoning?

Good personal hygiene is very important
Hand washing: always wash your hands with soap and running hot water especially:

- After using or cleaning the toilet
- After attending to anyone with diarrhoea or vomiting
- Before eating
- Before handling, preparing, serving, or consuming food or drink
- After handling animals
- After handling raw meat

Cleaning: Utensils and surfaces should be kept clean at all times especially before preparing food.

Preparing food: Separate boards and utensils should be used for raw and ready to eat food.

Storage and Refrigeration:

Raw food must be kept separate to cooked or ready to eat food in the fridge - this is especially true for meat and dairy produce. Do not overfill the fridge.

Meat should be stored on the bottom shelf.

Make sure your fridge is working properly. Under three degrees is ideal temperature for fridge storage. Listeria can grow in a fridge at four degrees.

Make sure your freezer is working correctly. -18 degrees is the ideal temperature for frozen food.

Cooking:

Food should be cooked thoroughly to 75 degrees until the juice runs clear and according to the instructions on the packaging. Make sure you defrost food fully in the fridge overnight.

If you are reheating food, reheat it to 70 degrees. If you have food leftovers, let them cool before you put them in the fridge. When you are abroad only eat foods that are cooked and served hot.

How can I contact a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team?

Tell the Clinical Nurse Manager, doctor or nurse looking after you that you would like to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team and they will contact us.

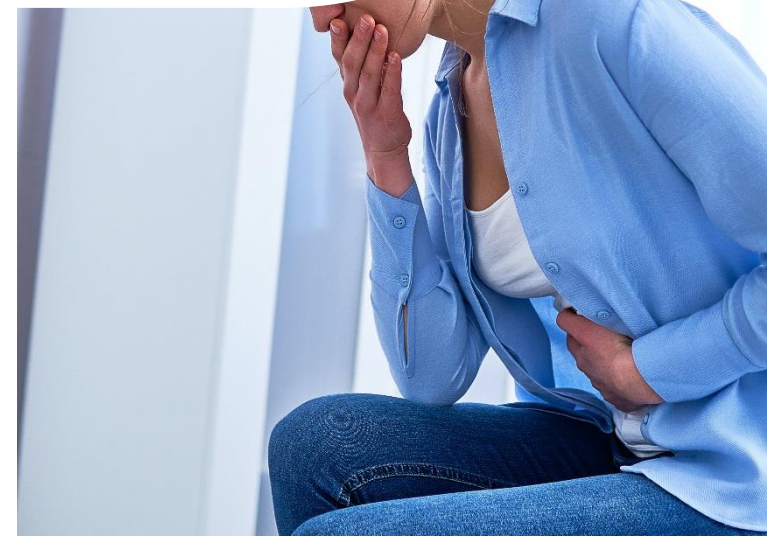
We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at the time of publication.

References | Health Protection Surveillance Centre (hpsc.ie) Centre for Disease Control USA, Food Safety Authority of Ireland.



PATIENT
INFORMATION
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Food-borne illness



What is foodborne illness and food poisoning?

Foodborne illness is any illness caused by eating contaminated food. It can happen after eating food contaminated with harmful bacteria or other pathogens. **Food poisoning** is a specific subset of foodborne illness. When a person gets food poisoning they suffer from the effects of consuming specific toxins, parasites or chemicals in contaminated food or water.

Anyone can become sick if they eat unsafe food but some people are more at risk than others. Those most likely to have more serious illness from food poisoning are: older people, babies, young children, those undergoing treatment for cancer, those who are immunocompromised or during pregnancy.

The incubation period (time between eating contaminated food and becoming ill) is usually between one to 36 hours, and the illness usually lasts for three to seven days. Food that can cause illness may be contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites or toxins i.e.:

How is food poisoning spread?

Food is the most common source. It can also be spread by contact with people who are infected/have food poisoning and who do not wash their hands, eating unwashed fruit and vegetables, from contaminated water and from contact with animals.

What are high risk foods?

High risk foods are food that have a greater risk of causing food poisoning include food that is ready to eat, food that is reheated or food that must be stored in the refrigerator.

Examples of high risk foods

- Undercooked or lightly cooked meats, especially chicken
- Deli meats, pâtés & cold meats
- Raw or partly cooked eggs
- Sandwiches containing any of these listed high risk items
- Raw fish including shellfish
- Frozen fruit and vegetables if not cooked properly
- Pre-prepared fruits and salads including prewashed salad leaves
- Unpasteurised milk and cream and products made with unpasteurised items like: Yogurts, desserts, ice-cream
- Soft cheeses
- Reheated rice
- Cold and hot packaged soups

Food poisoning bacteria are too small to see. Contaminated food may look, smell and taste ok.
Always follow the use by dates on food.

Symptoms of food poisoning

Food poisoning symptoms vary from mild to very serious and can be different depending on the germ.

The most common symptoms of food poisoning are:

- Upset stomach and nausea
- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Fever
- Headache
- Flu like symptoms
- On rare occasions -severe illness

How do you know you have food poisoning?

If you are in hospital, a sample of your diarrhoea is tested in our Microbiology Laboratory. The result may confirm that you have food poisoning.

How is food poisoning treated?

Most cases of food poisoning are simple short-lived illnesses and do not require any treatment.

Very rarely a severe case of bacterial infection (e.g. typhoid) will require antibiotics but this is the exception. Drinking plenty of fluids and good hand hygiene is important.

Should I seek medical advice?

If you notice any of the following symptoms you should seek medical advice:

- You cannot keep any food or fluids down
- Diarrhoea that lasts more than 48 hours
- You have blood in your stool
- Small children become floppy or unresponsive
- Adults become poorly responsive
- Patient begins to stop passing water

Bacteria	Viruses	Bacteria that produce toxins	Water borne disease
<i>Salmonella</i>	<i>Norovirus</i>	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	<i>Cryptosporidium</i>
<i>E.Coli</i>		<i>Clostridium botulinum</i>	<i>Weils disease</i>
<i>Listeria</i>			<i>Hepatitis A</i>
<i>Campylobacter</i>			<i>Typhoid</i>
<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>			<i>Cholera</i>
<i>Bacillus cereus</i>			