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Foodborne Illness

Also called: Food Poisoning

Each year, around 48 million people in the United States get sick from contaminated food. Common causes include bacteria and viruses. Less often, the cause may be a parasite or a harmful chemical, such as a high amount of pesticides. Symptoms of foodborne illness depend on the cause. They can be mild or serious. They usually include:

- Upset stomach
- Abdominal cramps
- Nausea and vomiting [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>]
- Diarrhea [<https://medlineplus.gov/diarrhea.html>]
- Fever
- Dehydration [<https://medlineplus.gov/dehydration.html>]

Most foodborne illnesses are acute. This means that they happen suddenly and last a short time.

It takes several steps to get food from the farm or fishery to your dining table. Contamination can happen during any of these steps. For example, it can happen to:

- Raw meat during slaughter
- Fruits and vegetables when they are growing or when they are processed
- Refrigerated foods when they are left on a loading dock in warm weather

But it can also happen in your kitchen if you leave food out for more than 2 hours at room temperature. [Handling food safely](https://medlineplus.gov/foodsafety.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/foodsafety.html>] can help prevent foodborne illnesses.

Most people with foodborne illness get better on their own. It is important to replace lost fluids and electrolytes to prevent dehydration. If your health care provider can diagnose the specific cause, you may get medicines such as [antibiotics](#) [<https://medlineplus.gov/antibiotics.html>] to treat it. For more serious illness, you may need treatment at a hospital.

NIH: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Start Here

- About Food Safety [<https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- About Four Steps to Food Safety [<https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/prevention/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Food Poisoning [<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-poisoning>] (Department of Health and Human Services)
- Food Poisoning [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/food-poisoning/symptoms-causes/syc-20356230?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- Food Poisoning [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/food-poisoning>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/intoxicacion-alimentos>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Bacteria Culture Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/bacteria-culture-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-cultivo-de-bacterias/>]
- Ova and Parasite Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/ova-and-parasite-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-huevos-y-parasitos/>]
- Stool Tests (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/labtest8.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/labtest8.html>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Food Safety: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/foodsafety.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/foodsafety.html>]
- People at Risk of Foodborne Illness [<https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/people-risk-foodborne-illness>]
(Food and Drug Administration)
- People at Risk: Those with Weakened Immune Systems [<https://www.foodsafety.gov/people-at-risk/people-with-weakened-immune-systems>] (Department of Health and Human Services)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.foodsafety.gov/personas-en-riesgo-mgac/personas-con-el-sistema-inmunitario-debilitado>]
- Preventing Food Poisoning [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2024/12/preventing-food-poisoning>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/prevencion-de-las-intoxicaciones-alimentarias>]

Specifics

- About Norovirus [<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/es/about/acerca-de-los-norovirus.html>]
- About Trichinellosis [<https://www.cdc.gov/trichinellosis/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- About Vibrio Infection [<https://www.cdc.gov/vibrio/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Chicken and Food Poisoning [<https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/foods/chicken.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/es/foods/el-pollo-y-la-intoxicacion-alimentaria.html>]
- Parasites and Foodborne Illness [<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/foodborne-illness-and-disease/pathogens/parasites-and-foodborne-illness>] (Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service)
- Shigellosis [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/shigellosis>]  (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases)

Statistics and Research

- Burden of Foodborne Illness in the United States [<https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/php/data-research/foodborne-illness-burden/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Foodborne Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Foodborne+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Monitoring the incidence and causes of disease potentially transmitted by food... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40738148>]
- Article: Monitoring the incidence and causes of disease potentially transmitted by food... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40738147>]

• Article: CrAssphage as a Human Enteric Viral Contamination Bioindicator in Marketed Bivalve...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40733628>]

• Foodborne Illness -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Foodborne+Diseases%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+OR+%22Food+Contamination%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- Food and Drug Administration [<https://www.fda.gov/>]
- FoodSafety.gov [<https://www.foodsafety.gov/>] (Department of Health and Human Services)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Collecting a Stool Sample for Testing (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stool-tests-done.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/stool-tests-done.html>]
- Cronobacter Sakazakii [<https://www.fda.gov/food/foodborne-pathogens/cronobacter-sakazakii>] (Food and Drug Administration)
- Food Poisoning [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/food-poisoning.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- Preventing Cronobacter in Infants [<https://www.cdc.gov/cronobacter/prevention/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Shigella Infections (Shigellosis) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/shigella.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/shigella.html>]

Teenagers

- Diarrhea [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/diarrhea.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/diarrhea.html>]

Patient Handouts

- Food poisoning [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001652.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001652.htm>]
- Foodborne Illness-Causing Organisms in the U.S.: What You Need to Know [<https://www.fda.gov/media/77727/download>] (Food and Drug Administration) - **PDF**
- Gastritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001150.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001150.htm>]
- Poisoning - fish and shellfish [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002851.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002851.htm>]
- Shigellosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000295.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000295.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Amebiasis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000298.htm>]

Fecal culture [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003758.htm>]

Food poisoning [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001652.htm>]

Food poisoning prevention [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001981.htm>]

Gastritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001150.htm>]

Poisoning - fish and shellfish [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002851.htm>]

Shigellosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000295.htm>]

Stool Gram stain [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003757.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Botulism [<https://medlineplus.gov/botulism.html>]

Campylobacter Infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/campylobacterinfections.html>]

Drinking Water [<https://medlineplus.gov/drinkingwater.html>]

E. Coli Infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/ecoliinfections.html>]

Food Safety [<https://medlineplus.gov/foodsafety.html>]

Hepatitis A [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisa.html>]

Listeria Infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/listeriainfections.html>]

Salmonella Infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/salmonellainfections.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Foodborne Illness* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

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