

Minnesota Foodborne Illness Hotline

Call to report
foodborne illness

Toll free statewide:

1- 877- 366-3455

1- 877- FOOD ILL

Acute Disease Epidemiology
625 N Robert St.
St. Paul, MN 55155
www.health.state.mn.us



Minnesota Foodborne Illness Hotline

- ! Your call to the hotline helps us identify foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota and help prevent the spread of illness to others.

Hotline Hours:

Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

We will return all messages left after normal business hours the next working day. You may also email us: foodill@health.state.mn.us

- ! You must include your name and daytime phone number in your message.
- ! Foodborne illness often **occurs 1 - 4 days after eating** contaminated foods.
- ! Hotline staff will ask about your symptoms, the foods you ate, and where you ate in the 4 days before your illness began.
- ! We will forward your report to the environmental health staff responsible for inspecting the restaurants, delis & grocery stores you mention.
- ! All information we collect about your illness is private. We will not release your name to anyone outside the public health food safety system without your permission.

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Causes and symptoms

- ! Foodborne illness is caused by ingesting germs or toxins in food.

Bacteria & viruses are types of germs. Some bacteria produce poisonous chemicals called toxins.

- ! Common types of foodborne illness usually include **diarrhea** or **vomiting** lasting **12 - 48 hours**.

What people call the "stomach flu" may be caused by viruses on food.

- ! Other types of foodborne illness may last several days, or include fever or bloody diarrhea.

Incubation

Many people with foodborne illness believe they got it from the last meal they ate. This is not usually the case.

- ! Illness is usually caused by foods **eaten 1-4 days earlier**.

Transmission

Germs pass out of people in feces & will survive between fingers & under nails unless hand washing is very thorough.

After using the toilet or changing diapers, a person who touches food without careful hand washing may transfer germs to others and make them ill.

- ! Always wash hands well before preparing foods!



Foods become unsafe to eat by

! **Touching foods with dirty hands**

When a person uses the toilet or touches items like doorknobs, pets or money, germs from those surfaces may be transferred to foods the person handles.



! **Cross-contamination**

Uncooked meat may contain harmful bacteria & contaminate cutting boards, knives, dishes, or dish towels.

After handling raw meat, wash all utensils & surfaces with soap and hot water before using them again.

! Do **not** cut salad items or other ready-to-eat foods with the same knife or on the same cutting board used to prepare raw meats.



! When removing cooked foods from the grill, do **not** put them back on the same plate used to carry raw meats to the grill.

! **Undercooking meats**

Meat may be contaminated with germs from animal feces during slaughter.

This makes meats, particularly ground meats like hamburger, unsafe to eat when undercooked.



For a safe cooking guide, call MDH Environmental Health Services at [651-201-4500](tel:651-201-4500).

! **Inadequate cooling**

Cooling hot foods at room temperature before putting them in the refrigerator allows harmful bacteria to grow on foods.

Put foods in small, shallow containers and place them immediately in the refrigerator so they cool quickly.

! **Inadequate reheating**

Refrigeration may slow the growth of bacteria, but it does not kill them.

Re-heat leftover foods thoroughly to destroy any harmful organisms before eating.

! **Contamination of fresh produce**



Foodborne illness outbreaks have been caused by a variety of fresh fruits & vegetables that were contaminated in the fields where they were grown or during processing before they were sold to consumers.

Outbreaks have been caused by melons, strawberries, lettuce, alfalfa sprouts, raspberries, pineapples, tomatoes, and other produce items. Always wash fresh fruits and vegetables well!

Unpasteurized juices, usually sold in the refrigerated section of the grocery store or at apple orchards, have also caused outbreaks of foodborne illness.

Proper hand washing



Lather with soap for 20 seconds - about the time it takes to say the alphabet

- Wash between fingers carefully
- Use a fingernail brush around nails and cuticles



Rinse under warm running water



Dry with a paper towel or a clean hand towel

Treating foodborne illness

People who are otherwise healthy usually recover fully from foodborne illness without medical treatment.

Antibiotics are not routinely recommended for most foodborne illnesses.



Some people, particularly the elderly, very young children, and persons with weakened immune systems may need medical attention for foodborne illness. They should consult a health care provider regarding their illness.

Laboratory testing

Your health care provider may recommend you submit a stool sample for testing to determine what caused your illness and if antibiotics might be effective.