NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.℠

Helping Hand™

Food-borne Illness
("Food Poisoning")

When people eat tainted food, they can develop anything from a mild illness to a serious disease. Although food is very safe in the United States, millions of Americans get food-borne illnesses ("food poisoning") each year. Symptoms can begin to show as early as 6 hours after consuming the germs or as late as 7 days after.

This chart shows the symptoms that can occur and some of the germs that cause the most common forms of food-borne illnesses. The symptoms of illness depend on the germ that is causing it:

	Germs that Cause Food-borne Illness:			
Symptoms:	Campylobacter	E-Coli	Salmonella	Shigella
Fever	√	√	√	√
Stomach Cramps	√	√	√	√
Diarrhea	√	√	√	√
Diarrhea with blood or mucus	√	√	√	√
Vomiting	√		√	
Nausea	√		√	√
Headache				√
Seizures				√
Excess tiredness	√			

Treatment

Most cases of food-borne illness get better without treatment in 5 to 10 days. It is important to make sure your child drinks water because these illnesses can cause dehydration (getting "dried out"). Sometimes, if symptoms do not clear up or if they get worse, the doctor may prescribe antibiotics. Refer to the Helping Hands, *Diarrhea,* HH-I-29 , and *Dehydration: Giving Liquids at Home,* HH-I- 207.

Milder cases may go away on their own without any medicine. Do not use over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medicine for your child unless your doctor or nurse tells you to. If used, be sure to follow their directions **exactly**.

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Treatment, continued

- Continue to give your child small frequent amounts of liquids:

– **For infants:** Give Pedialyte®, breast milk or infant formula.

– **For infants over 6 months, toddlers and children:** Give flavored drinks, diluted 3-to-1 with water, popsicles or Pedialyte® Popsicles, or water. (Refer to the Helping Hand, *Diarrhea,* HH-I-29). Watch for signs and symptoms of dehydration.

- Add solid foods such as crackers, dry cereal and low fat, low-spice foods a little at a time until your child can eat his regular foods.

When to Keep Children Home from School or Childcare

- Keep your child home from school or childcare until the child's doctor says that it is safe for him to return.
- Even after the doctor says it is all right to return to school or childcare, your child's stools (bowel movements) may still be somewhat loose. Before the child goes back, it is important to consider whether his stool can be contained by the diaper or he can get to the bathroom quickly enough.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if any of the following occurs:

- If your child suddenly develops a high fever over 101°F axillary (under the arm)
- If the stomach pain becomes severe (worse than a few cramps)
- If the diarrhea gets worse or becomes bloody (more than a streak of blood)
- If you notice any signs of dehydration: dry mouth; decreased urine output; mouth is dry or sticky; child is listless (no energy); eyes are sunken; infant's "soft spot" on top of the head "pulls in."
- Child does not improve in 24 hours.

Preventing Food-Borne Illness

- Refer to Helping Hand *Food-borne Illness: Safe Food Preparation,* HH-IV-79
- Do not eat any foods that contain raw eggs, poultry or meat.
- Keep raw foods apart from cooked foods.
- Keep utensils that have been used for raw food away from clean utensils and cooked food.
- Cook food to a safe temperature (between 140°F and 180°F).

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Preventing Food-Borne Illness, continued

- Refrigerate or freeze food quickly.
- Do not drink unpasteurized milk.
- Do not drink impure water.
- Wash your hands before preparing or serving food.
- Wash the skins of fruits and vegetables before cutting or eating them.
- Always wash hands after touching animals, using the bathroom, helping a child with toileting or changing a baby’s diaper.
- Wash with soap and hot water any surfaces and utensils you use to make food. A sanitizer, such as Clorox® Wipes, can be used on surfaces.
- In a childcare setting, preparing food and changing diapers should be done by different people whenever possible.