



Food Poisoning

When people eat food that contains germs or toxins (contaminated food), they can develop anything from a mild illness to a serious disease. Food is very safe in the United States. However, millions of Americans get sick each year from germs, or their toxins, that can be in food. This is called food poisoning. The most common food poisoning germs are:

- Hepatitis A
- Listeria
- Shigella
- Norovirus
- Salmonella
- Campylobacter
- E. coli (*Escherichia coli*)
- Botulism (*Clostridium botulinum*)
- Staph (*Staphylococcus aureus*)

Causes

Food poisoning is usually caused by bacteria that have formed toxins in food. This makes it unsafe to eat. Food poisoning is commonly associated with raw eggs, raw or undercooked meat, raw vegetables, unwashed fruits, raw seafood, and unpasteurized (raw) milk. Dirty or unclean water can also cause food poisoning.

Signs and Symptoms

Sickness generally lasts from a few hours to several days. Symptoms can start within hours, days, or weeks after being exposed to the contaminated food. Most types of food poisoning cause one or more of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Nausea
- Throwing up (vomiting)
- Watery or bloody diarrhea
- Belly (abdominal) pain and cramps

Treatment

Most cases of food poisoning get better in 5 to 10 days without treatment. Some things you can do to help your child while they're sick include:

- Drinking a lot of liquids. Some food poisoning symptoms can cause dehydration. This means that there is not enough water in your child's body.
 - Call your child's doctor or health care provider if they have any of these signs of dehydration:
 - No energy
 - Dry or sticky mouth
 - Soft spot on the head that pulls in
 - Sunken eyes
 - Not peeing as much
 - For infants **under 6 months of age**, give Pedialyte[®], breast milk, or formula.
 - For children **over 6 months of age**, give water, Pedialyte[®], popsicles, or flavored drinks diluted with water (3-to-1).
- Giving medicine if directed by their doctor or health care provider. **Do not** use over-the-counter (OTC) anti-diarrhea medicine unless they tell you to.
- Adding solid foods, like crackers or dry cereal, until your child can eat regular foods.
- Contacting your child's doctor or health care provider if they're not getting better to see if an antibiotic may be helpful.
- Keeping your child home from school or childcare until their doctor or health care provider says they can return. Sometimes negative poop (stool) cultures for some bacteria may be needed.

When to Call the Doctor

- Call your child's doctor or health care provider if they:
 - Do not get better in 24 hours.
 - Have symptoms that are getting worse.
 - Have stomach pain that is worse than a few cramps.
 - Quickly get a high fever over 101° Fahrenheit (F) or 38° Celsius (C) under their arm.
 - Have diarrhea that gets worse or has blood in it (more than just a streak).
- If you have any other questions, call your child's doctor or health care provider.

Prevention

Food poisoning can't always be prevented. However, these 4 steps will help reduce your risk of getting sick:

Clean	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wash your hands and work surfaces before touching any food.• Wash your hands while you are preparing food.• Clean your hands and work surfaces after food has been prepared.• Germs can live in many places around your kitchen. These are places like your hands, countertops, cutting boards, utensils, etc.
Separate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs away from ready-to-eat foods.• Use separate cutting boards.• Keep raw meat away from other foods while shopping and in the refrigerator.
Cook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature. See page 4 for a temperature guide.
Chill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set your refrigerator to 40°F (4.4°C) or below.• Put leftovers in the refrigerator within 2 hours of cooking. Put away within 1 hour if food is exposed to a temperature above 90°F (32.2°C).

Handling Food

Follow the directions below when eating these foods:

- **Eggs** – Cook eggs until they are firm. Avoid recipes that contain raw eggs. Do not eat raw cookie dough.
- **Fruits and vegetables** – Scrub and clean the outside of all fruits and vegetables.
- **Meats** – Cook meat completely.
 - Do not cook meat intended for later use. If you need to cook ahead, chill the cooked meat quickly.
 - Only marinate raw meat in the refrigerator. Do not reuse the marinade.
 - Cut into the meat when grilling to make sure it's done. You can also use a food thermometer to check.
 - Do not put cooked meat on a plate where raw meat was.
- **Coolers** – Keep the cooler inside an air-conditioned car. Never keep it in the trunk. Replace the ice if it melts. Keep drinks in their own cooler.

How to Use a Food Thermometer

- **Roasts** – Insert halfway through without touching the bone.
- **Hamburgers, steaks, chops** – Insert into thickest part of the meat.
- **Poultry** – Insert into thickest part of the thigh.

Temperature Guide

Foods should be cooked to the temperature shown below. This will help prevent food poisoning.

Food Type	Minimum Internal Temperature
Beef, Pork, Veal, and Lamb (chops, roasts, steaks)	145°F (62.8°C) with a 3-minute rest
Ground Meat	160°F (71.1°C)
Ham, uncooked (fresh or smoked)	145°F (62.8°C) with a 3-minute rest
Ham, fully cooked (to reheat)	140°F (60°C)
Poultry (ground, parts, whole, and stuffing)	165°F (73.9°C)
Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm
Egg dishes	160° (71.1°C)
Fin Fish	145°F (62.8°C) or flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork
Shrimp, Lobster, and Crabs	Flesh is pearly and opaque
Clams, Oysters, and Mussels	Shells open during cooking
Scallops	Flesh is milky white and firm
Leftovers and Casseroles	165°F (73.9°C)

Content source: Food and Drug Administration – Safe Food Handling