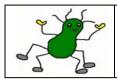
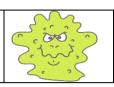
FOODBORNE DISEASE







What are foodborne diseases?

The term 'foodborne diseases' covers a range illnesses caused bv swallowing contaminated food or drink. They are caused by a variety of bacteria, viruses and parasites as well as toxins produced by bacteria in the food before consumption (eg. botulism). Some of the commoner bugs caught in the UK include Cryptosporidium, Campylobacter, E coli, Salmonella and Shigella. Infections generally caught abroad include cholera, typhoid and dysentery. Non-infectious causes include toxins found in shellfish and chemical contamination of food and water.

How do you catch them?

Foodborne diseases are caught by eating contaminated food or water or from someone who is already infected (faeco-oral spread).

Who is most at risk?

Pregnant women, young children, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems or chronic diseases are most at risk.

What foods pose the greatest risk?

Raw foods of animal origin are most likely to be contaminated – meat, poultry, eggs, unpasteurized milk and shellfish. Raw fruits and vegetables can also be contaminated. Other foods to avoid include soft cheeses, pates, deli meats and unpasteurized juices.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms are nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea, but the exact symptoms will depend on the cause of the illness. Symptoms do not develop at once; there is usually a delay of a few hours or days after the contaminated item is swallowed.

How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosis depends on testing a stool sample. A definite diagnosis is more likely to be made if the sample is taken as soon after the onset of illness as possible.

When should I consult my doctor?

You should consult your doctor if you have a high fever, profuse vomiting, bloody stools, diarrhoea that lasts more than 3 days or signs of dehydration (a dry mouth or a decrease in urine production).

Is there any treatment?

Treatment depends on the cause of the illness and the symptoms. Extra fluids are important, especially if you have diarrhoea or vomiting. This is particularly critical for babies, children, pregnant women and the elderly.

How is further spread prevented?

Foodborne diseases are notifiable, which means that your doctor is legally obliged to inform the Environmental Health Department of your case. An Environmental Health Officer or Consultant of Communicable Disease Control may contact or visit you to identify the source of contamination and help you prevent further spread of infection.

What about going to work or school?

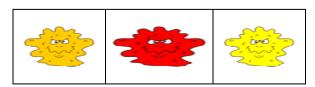
The following groups should consult the Environmental Health Officer or their doctor about how long they should remain at home after the symptoms have stopped:

- people working in the food and catering business.
- staff of healthcare facilities, particularly those looking after or serving food to infants, the elderly or the debilitated.
- children aged less than five years old who attend nurseries or playgroups.
- older children or adults who find it difficult to implement good standards of personal hygiene eg. those with learning disabilities or special needs, or in situations where hygienic arrangements are unreliable.

How can it be prevented?

- Hand washing is the most important part of infection control. Wash hands thoroughly with hot soapy water, particularly before eating or preparing food, after handling raw foods, after using or cleaning the toilet, changing a nappy, handling soiled items, attending to a patient, contact with animal or the soil. Dry your hands thoroughly.
- Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood separate from cooked foods at all times. Never store raw food above cooked food in the fridge. Place raw meats in sealed containers or bags to prevent juices dripping onto other foods.
- Wash utensils, chopping boards, dishes and surfaces thoroughly with a disinfectant such as dettol or bleach, after preparing raw foods and before dealing with other foods.
- If possible use one chopping board for fresh produce and one for raw foods.
- Store eggs and raw food in the fridge.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. Foods that include raw or partially cooked eggs are a risk.
- Meat and poultry should be well cooked. Cook poultry until the juices run clear and it is white in the middle. Cook meat until it is brown on the inside. Watch out at barbecues.

- Cook fish until it is opaque or white and flaky.
- Place cooked food on a clean plate; never put it back on the same plate or cutting board that held raw food.
- ◆ Eat cooked food immediately or refrigerate/freeze within 90 minutes and reheat thoroughly before eating.
- Defrost frozen food on a plate either in the refrigerator, the microwave or under cold running water, but not on the counter. Cook food immediately after defrosting.
- Wash all fruit and vegetables with running water to remove visible dirt. Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on produce, where bacteria can grow.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk. Protect foil topped milk bottles from being pecked by birds.
- Avoid swallowing water when doing water sports in rivers and lakes.
- Be particularly careful when travelling abroad to countries where sanitation is poor. Boil all your drinking water, including water used for brushing teeth. Avoid ice and salad. Do not eat uncooked food. Peel fruits yourself.



How can I prevent giving this infection to someone else?

- ◆ Don't prepare or handle food for other people until you have been symptom-free for 48 hours.
- If cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit, wash the surface with hot soapy water, before rinsing and allowing to dry. Paper towels or disposable cloths should be used for cleaning.
- Clean toilet bowls and seats, flush handles, door handles and taps at least daily with a household cleaner before rinsing and allowing to dry. Use disposable cloths.
- Soiled clothing and bedding should be washed on a hot cycle. Articles that are heavily soiled can be soaked beforehand in a disinfectant. After loading the washing machine wipe the outer surface with a disinfectant.
- Wear rubber gloves when cleaning the toilet, cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea and loading the washing machine with soiled clothing.
- Set aside a towel for your own personal use.

Where can I get more information?

Talk to your general practitioner (GP) or for further information or to raise a question please access www.birmingham.gov.ukor telephone 0121 303 6007.