



Food Poisoning

What's all the fuss about?

Have you ever had food poisoning? Perhaps you have, but thought you were sick with the flu. One in every four Americans will get food poisoning this year.

What is food poisoning?

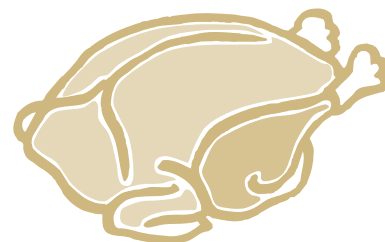
Food poisoning is caused by eating food containing harmful bacteria (or their toxins), viruses, or parasites. You cannot see, smell, or taste food to determine if it is safe. Food poisoning does not have to happen. Many such cases could be avoided if people simply handled food safely in their home.

Who gets food poisoning?

Over 76 million Americans get food poisoning every year. Most cases are not life-threatening. However, each year more than 5,000 people die from food poisoning. Serious complications, are more common with:

- Very young children
- Pregnant women
- Older adults
- The chronically ill

Older adults are more at risk for food poisoning, and once ill, it often takes them longer to recover. As we age, we experience changes that lessen our body's ability to fight bacteria. For example, there is a decrease in stomach acid, which is a natural defense against harmful bacteria. And over time, the immune system might become less able to rid the body of bacteria. Also, one's sense of taste or smell -- sometimes affected by medication or illness -- might not always sound an alert when food is spoiled.



How can you tell if you have food poisoning?

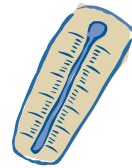
Only a physician can tell you if you have food poisoning. Symptoms associated with food poisoning usually begin six to 24 hours after you eat contaminated food. Sometimes food poisoning is confused with stomach or intestinal flu because the symptoms are so similar:

- Cramps;
- Nausea;
- Diarrhea; and vomiting.

Healthy adults usually recover from food poisoning in a few days, but members of high-risk populations, such as older adults, are more likely to develop serious complications that could lead to death.

How Can I prevent Food poisoning?

- **CLEAN** — Wash hands and surfaces often
- **SEPARATE** — Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing, or storing
- **COOK** — Cook food to proper temperatures
- **CHILL** — Refrigerate perishable foods promptly



Also, avoid eating these foods:

• Raw fish • Unpasteurized milk or cheese • Soft cheeses, such as feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined, and Mexican-style cheese • Raw or lightly cooked eggs, including foods that contain them such as salad dressings, cookie or cake batter, sauces, and eggnog • Raw meat or poultry • Raw alfalfa sprouts • Unpasteurized or untreated fruit or vegetable juice