

Food poisoning- symptoms and causes

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Food poisoning, also known as food borne illness, is caused by eating contaminated food. Infectious organisms including bacteria, viruses and

parasites releases their toxins and contaminate the food thus results in food poisoning which is toxic to the body.

Infectious organisms or their toxins can contaminate food during processing or production. Contamination can also occur at home if food is incorrectly handled or cooked or not properly stored.

DESCRIPTION

Food poisoning symptoms appear within hours of eating contaminated food which include nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Food poisoning is mild and resolves without treatment by taking care most often but sometimes it becomes severe and uncontrolled then people need to go to the hospital.

Food poisoning symptoms varies with the source of contamination. Food poisoning cause one or more of the following signs and symptoms:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Watery or bloody diarrhea
- Abdominal pain and cramps
- Fever

Signs and symptoms may start within hours or they may show symptoms within few days or even weeks later after eating the contaminated food. Sickness caused by food poisoning generally lasts from a few hours to several days.

Contamination of food can happen at any point of production: growing, harvesting, processing, storing, shipping or preparing. Cross-contamination

occurs during the transfer of harmful organisms from one surface to another. This is especially seen for raw, ready-to-eat foods, such as salads or other products. Because these foods are not cooked and harmful organisms appear on surfaces aren't destroyed before eating and can cause food poisoning. Many bacterial, viral or parasitic agents cause food poisoning.

To prevent food poisoning at home:

- Wash your hands, utensils and food surfaces often and keep them always clean and hygienic.
- Raw foods should be separated from ready-to-eat foods.
- Food should be cooked properly to a safe temperature.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods promptly in proper storage containers.
- Defrost food safely.
- When you have doubt that food got contaminated Throw it out.

Food poisoning is seen in fruits due to contamination of food by microbes is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1) Food poisoning is seen in fruits due to contamination of food by microbes.

Food poisoning is especially serious and potentially life-threatening for young children, pregnant women and their fetuses, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems. These individuals should take extra precautions by avoiding the following foods:

- Raw or rare meat and poultry
- Raw or undercooked fish or shellfish, including oysters, clams, mussels and scallops
- Raw or undercooked eggs or foods that may contain them, such as cookie dough and homemade ice cream
- Raw sprouts, such as alfalfa, bean, clover and radish sprouts

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| Unpasteurized juices and ciders | Refrigerated pates and meat spreads |
| Unpasteurized milk and milk products | Uncooked hot dogs, luncheon meats and deli meats |
| Soft cheeses, such as feta, Brie and Camembert; blue-veined cheese; and unpasteurized cheese | |
