

Though in-person Extension meetings, events and classes are canceled until June 30, we are still working in your communities and bringing online education and resources to all Minnesotans.

Sick from eating food? Symptoms? Who and when to report.



If you or a family member develop nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever or cramps, you could have foodborne illness. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to tell because depending on the illness, symptoms can appear anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 weeks later. Most often, people get sick within four to 48 hours after eating bad food.

In more serious cases, victims of foodborne illness may have nervous system problems like paralysis, double vision or trouble swallowing or breathing.

A foodborne illness for most "healthy" people is a nuisance and symptoms usually go away within a few days. However, for people who are at high risk (such as young children, pregnant women, elderly, or have a weakened immune system or a chronic disease), a foodborne illness can be life threatening and even deadly. Call a doctor or go to the hospital right away.

When to report foodborne illness

If you believe that you became sick from eating any food or beverage, call the Minnesota Foodborne Illness Hotline toll-free at 1-877-366-3455 (Twin Cities area at 651-201-5655) or your county health department or your medical clinic. Report any foodborne illness incidents if the food involved came from a restaurant or commercial outlet.

Give a detailed but short account of the incident. If the food is a commercial product, have it in hand so you can describe it. If you're asked to keep the food refrigerated so officials can examine it later, follow directions carefully.

When you call the hotline, county health department or medical clinic, this call will help identify foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota. It will also prevent the spread of illness to others.



When you call, remember

- Foodborne illness often occurs 1 to 4 days after eating contaminated foods.
- Hotline staff will ask you about your symptoms, the foods you ate and where you ate them in the 4 days before your symptoms began.
- All collected information is private and won't be released without your permission.
- If someone is not available to take your call, please leave a voice message with your name and telephone number. Or, send a message via e-mail: foodill@state.mn.us

After your call

- Your information will be forwarded to environmental health staff responsible for the area you suspect.
- You may be asked for a stool sample to help determine what is making you ill.

Norovirus: reduce your risk

Norovirus is a common viral infection of the digestive system. For the past 20 years, norovirus has caused more than half of the foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota. The Centers of Disease Control considers norovirus the leading cause of foodborne illness in the United States.

Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps are classic signs of norovirus illness. Symptoms begin 1 or 2 days after eating or drinking contaminated food or liquids. The illness is short lived, lasting 24 to 48 hours. Sometimes people infected with norovirus are not sick with symptoms but can still pass the illness to others.

Norovirus is a human disease and is easily spread from person to person by eating food touched by an infected person or touching a surface containing the virus.

Remember the facts and follow these food safety rules to reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

- Norovirus is spread to food by “unclean” hands.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet, before preparing food and before eating.
- Don't touch ready-to-eat food or ice with your bare hands. Use gloves, spoons or tongs instead.
- Norovirus is killed by cooking. Use a food thermometer to make certain foods reach the recommended internal cooking temperature.
- Norovirus can spread while you are sick and during recovery. Do not prepare food for others while you are ill and for at least 72 hours after you recover.
- Disinfect hand contact surfaces such as faucets in the kitchen and bathroom with a bleach solution of 1 tablespoons of chlorine bleach to 1 gallon of water. Let air dry.

Sources and related resources

- USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2015). [Kitchen Companion: Your Safe Food Handbook](#).
- Minnesota Department of Health. [Reporting Suspected Foodborne and Waterborne Illness](#).

Related resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [E. coli](http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/index.html) <<http://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/index.html>> .
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Salmonella](https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/index.html) <<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/index.html>> .

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Reviewed in 2018

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