



Food poisoning

CAUSE	SIGNS & SYMPTOMS	PREVENTION
Botulism. Toxin from bacteria usually from eating improperly canned foods. Also found in honey, baked potatoes in aluminum foil, and oils infused with garlic and herbs. Grows only in little or no oxygen.	Blurred vision. Double vision. A hard time speaking and swallowing. Breathing problems. Muscle weakness. Paralysis. Signs occur within 18 to 36 hours.	Follow proper canning methods. Don't eat foods from cans with leaks or bulges. Refrigerate oils infused with garlic or herbs. Don't give honey to children less than 1 year old.
E. coli. Bacteria from contaminated water, raw milk, raw or rare ground beef, raw leafy greens, unpasteurized apple cider, or contact with animal feces.	Diarrhea or bloody discharge. Abdominal cramps. Nausea. Signs occur within 2 to 5 days and last about 8 days.	Don't drink unpasteurized milk and apple cider. Wash your hands after using the bathroom and cleaning up animal feces.
Listeria. Bacteria from unpasteurized milk, uncooked meats, foods contaminated during processing (cold cuts, hot dogs, soft cheeses).	Fever. Chills. Headache. Backache. Abdominal pain. Diarrhea. Often, signs occur within 48 to 72 hours, but can take up to 4 weeks to occur.	Don't drink unpasteurized milk. Cook beef to an internal temperature of 160°F.
Salmonella. Bacteria from raw or undercooked eggs, poultry, sprouts, nuts, and meat and from food that comes in contact with contaminated surfaces.	Stomach pain. Diarrhea. Nausea. Chills. Fever. Headache. Signs often occur within 8 to 12 hours and last up to 1 or 2 days.	Don't have unpasteurized milk, raw and undercooked eggs. Cook eggs to 160°F (the white and yolk are firm). Use clean utensils and surfaces. Wash hands after feeding pets.
Staphylococcal enterotoxin. Toxin from <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> bacteria usually from meats, dairy foods, eggs, etc. that are not kept cold (e.g., unrefrigerated, at picnics, etc.) Also spread by human contact.	Severe nausea. Abdominal cramps. Diarrhea. Vomiting. Signs occur within 1 to 8 hours and last up to 3 days. Signs last longer if severe dehydration occurs.	Keep foods that can spoil cold (40°F or below) or hot (140°F or higher). Don't eat foods kept for more than 2 hours between 40°F and 140°F. Don't eat foods that look or smell spoiled.
Chemicals. From foods with pesticides and eating poisonous mushrooms or poisonous plant leaves or berries.	Sweating. Dizziness. Mental confusion. Very teary eyes. Watery mouth. Stomach pain. Vomiting. Diarrhea. Signs start to occur within 30 minutes.	Wash raw fruits and vegetables before eating them. Don't store food or liquids in containers with lead-based paints. Don't store alcohol in lead crystal containers.
Hepatitis A virus. From contaminated water, raw and undercooked shellfish and raw produce.	Appetite loss. Fatigue. Nausea. Vomiting. Fever. Jaundice and dark urine after 2 to 7 weeks. Liver damage and death from severe infection.	Hepatitis A vaccine. Don't eat raw or undercooked shellfish. Wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet. Avoid contaminated water.
Norovirus. From food and touching objects contaminated with the virus. Direct contact with an infected person.	Nausea. Vomiting. Diarrhea. Stomach cramps. Signs occur within 12 to 48 hours and last up to 2 days.	Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before handling food. Disinfect contaminated surfaces.
Mercury. From eating contaminated fish (e.g., shark, swordfish, tuna, king mackerel, tilefish).	Numbness and tingling in the lips, fingers, and toes. A hard time walking and speaking. Muscle weakness. Memory loss. Vision problems. Mental changes. Tremors.	Check local health department for safety of fish. Limit fish high in mercury. Pregnant women need to follow the advice of their doctor.

TREATMENT

Self-care treats most cases. Botulism, chemical food poisoning, and severe bacterial food poisoning need immediate care.





TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have any of these problems?

- Botulism symptoms
- Signs of dehydration
- You vomit bright red blood or matter that looks like coffee grounds.
- You have bright red blood in diarrhea.
- You have a severe headache that persists, a stiff neck, or a convulsion.
- You are confused.

NO

YES ➔ GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE



Do you have any of these problems?

- Severe vomiting. Blood-streaked stools.
- Fever over 101°F.
- Pain has lasted for several hours or the pain gets worse.

NO

YES ➔ SEE DOCTOR



Do you vomit after having only ice chips for 12 hours? Or, do you still have diarrhea after using self-care for 2 days?

NO

YES ➔ CALL DOCTOR



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

- For chemical food poisoning, call the Poison Control Center (800-222-1222).
- Heed warnings for food products that could be harmful. News reports list these items. So does the FDA at fda.gov.