

Suspect You Have Food Poisoning? 10 Things To Do & Know

from stopfoodborneillness.org

1. SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE: CONSULT A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER . . .

When any of the following symptoms are present with diarrhea:

- Stomach pains, nausea and/or a fever over 101.5°F (38.6°C)
- **Bloody diarrhea** (blood in stools)
- Prolonged vomiting or trouble keeping liquids down (leading to dehydration)
Signs of severe dehydration are dry mouth, decreased urination, dizziness, fatigue, sticky saliva, sunken eyes, low blood pressure or increased heart rate and/or breathing rate
- Confusion or difficulty reasoning
++ **OR** ++
- **Children:** diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours | **Adults:** diarrhea that lasts more than 3 days

Trust your instincts with your children's symptoms . . . You know your child.

2. PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE – DON'T SPREAD IT AROUND

- Be diligent: Practice good personal hygiene when caring for someone who is ill
- **Wash your hands** with soap and water **often** and **thoroughly**
- If possible, have sick person use one bathroom, separate from the rest of the family
- If only one bathroom is available, clean and disinfect it thoroughly after every use
- Carefully seal and dispose of dirty diapers
- Do not share food/drinks while ill and/or recovering
- *Do not prepare food for others

***It is important to remember that even after you begin to feel better you may still be contagious.**

3. PREVENT DEHYDRATION

- Replacing lost fluids – is **ESSENTIAL** – to avoid dehydration
- Pedialyte (and similar products) can be helpful for rehydrating both children and adults
- Continuous diarrhea or vomiting leads to severe dehydration (See #1 above for symptoms)
- *Diarrhea happens because your body is trying to rid itself of toxins*
- You may not want to take anti-diarrheal medications *unless directed by a healthcare provider*
- Discuss with your healthcare provider before taking antibiotics for a suspected foodborne illness. If your illness is viral, antibiotics will have no effect

Important Note: In some cases, such as with an E. coli O157:H7 infection, taking antibiotics can lead to a more severe complication like Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS).

4. REQUEST LABORATORY TESTING

- If you or your doctor suspect a foodborne illness, **it is very important to run additional tests to determine which pathogen caused your illness** - this ensures you get the correct care/treatment
- Viruses are usually found by testing stool for a specific virus' genetic markers
- Ask your healthcare provider **WHEN** your results will be available and **WHO** will contact you
- Talk to your doctor about further tests if your illness cannot be confirmed
- Identifying the pathogen can help treat you now, as well as understand what issues may arise in the future

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5. RECORD FOODS EATEN IN THE PAST 7 DAYS

- If you or your doctor suspect foodborne illness make a list of everything eaten in the 7 days prior to illness
- **Make this list as soon as possible so it is complete and accurate**
- The last thing you ate is most likely NOT what made you sick
- Knowing what you've eaten is critical and may assist in determining the cause of your foodborne illness
- This information will help the health department verify if your illness is part of an outbreak, potentially saving others from the same illness

6. SAVE YOUR RECEIPTS

- If possible, gather and save all relevant grocery store/restaurant/travel receipts for the days and weeks before the illness occurred
- *Do not give your receipts to anyone without making copies first*

7. SAVE SUSPECT FOOD PRODUCTS

- If you have access to the food/beverage you suspect made you ill, carefully wrap, label and freeze them so **no one else eats/drinks them** and they can be tested if necessary
- If health department authorities ask for your sample, *give them a representative portion* - not the entire sample

8. CONTACT YOUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT

- Contact your state/local health department with a suspected/confirmed foodborne illness
- STOP can assist with finding your health department: stopfoodborneillness.org/food-safety-by-state/
- For a national list of reportable conditions see: ndc.services.cdc.gov/ (the list may vary by state)
- If your case is a reportable condition, *insist on an interview with the health department*

9. REACH OUT TO YOUR COMMUNITY OR MEDIA

- Social media is an effective way to learn if anyone in your circle or wider community has a similar illness
- A site like iwaspoisoned.com may have additional information about others nearby who have gotten sick
- Local media is a reliable source of outbreaks in your area
- Check stopfoodborneillness.org/recent-recalls to determine if there have been any recalls of foods you have eaten or outbreaks of the illness for which you tested positive

10. CONNECT WITH STOP FOODBORNE ILLNESS

Email: info@stopfoodborneillness.org | Call: 773-269-6555 x7 | Website: stopfoodborneillness.org

