

Foodborne Illness

What are foodborne illnesses?

Foodborne illnesses are caused by consuming food or water that has been contaminated by germs or chemicals. Untreated water; raw and undercooked food from animals, including raw milk and raw eggs; and uncooked and unwashed vegetables may contain germs that can make you sick.



What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of foodborne illnesses include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, and fever. Symptoms can begin within a few hours to several days depending on the germ. Most people with foodborne illnesses recover within 12-48 hours after the body clears the infection. However, illness can last for 10 days or more and may lead to hospitalizations or even death.

What should I do if I think I have a foodborne illness?

- ◆ Seek medical attention if you have bloody diarrhea, diarrhea that lasts more than three days, vomiting, a high fever (temperature over 102°F), signs of dehydration, or if you have a health condition that puts you at greater risk of complications.
- ◆ Contact your local health department and health care provider if you suspect you have a foodborne illness. Follow guidance from your local health department regarding work restrictions, testing, and keeping or discarding food items.
- ◆ If you test positive for a reportable illness, your health care provider will notify the health department. Your local health department and the Illinois Department of Public Health work together to investigate foodborne illnesses. Your cooperation with sharing information, such as symptoms, what foods you ate, and where those foods were purchased, will help detect, stop, and prevent future foodborne illnesses.

How can I prevent foodborne illnesses?

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after preparing or eating foods, and after using the bathroom or changing a diaper.



Follow food safety guidelines. Separate raw meat and juices from other foods, cook food to the right temperature, and refrigerate promptly.



If you have diarrhea, **do not handle, prepare, or cook foods** for others at home or at your job* until your symptoms have resolved for 48 hours.



Visit www.dph.illinois.gov or contact your [local health department](#) for more information.

*Persons with diarrhea or vomiting of infectious or unknown cause shall not work in sensitive occupations, as a health care worker, or as food handlers until 48 hours after diarrhea and vomiting have resolved without use of antidiarrheal or antiemetic medications and shall adhere to restrictions specified in this [Part](#) specific to each etiologic agent.

