



Effects of Food Poisoning and their Major Causes

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DESCRIPTION

Food poisoning occurs when we swallow food or water that contains bacteria, parasites, viruses, or toxins produced by those bacteria. It is most often caused by common bacteria such as staphylococci and *E. coli*. Food poisoning can affect one or more people who ate the same food. It is commonly seen after picnics, school cafeterias, large social events, or meals at restaurants. When we consume contaminated food, we can get food poisoning. It is usually not serious and most people recover in a few days without treatment. Food is typically contaminated by viruses or bacteria like *salmonella* or *E. coli* in cases of food poisoning.

Many people may not realize it, but millions of Americans get sick each year from foodborne epidemics. It estimates that illness, 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths are caused by foodborne pathogens. Food poisoning can be caused by anything from *Salmonella* to *E. coli* to *Campylobacter*. Symptoms of food poisoning can range from mild diarrhea to vomiting and can quickly lead to death. We don't know where the bacteria that cause food poisoning lurk, but there are steps we can take to avoid exposure to them. Often it comes down to food safety.

Escherichia coli and *Salmonella* bacteria that cause food poisoning can be prevented by handling food with care during storage, cleaning, preparation, and cooking. Some bacteria cause nausea within hours of ingestion. For others, it may take several days to get sick. Symptoms caused by different bacteria, when they typically begin, and what those bacteria typically cause. Food poisoning can be dangerous when it leads to severe dehydration and other complications. The symptoms listed below may indicate that an adult or child is suffering from severe food poisoning, dehydration or other complications, or a serious health problem other than food poisoning. People with these signs and symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

Diarrhea is especially dangerous for newborns and young children, causing severe dehydration within a day or two. A dehydrated child can die within a day if left untreated. Seek immediate medical attention if we are a parent or caregiver of an infant or child with any of the following signs or symptoms:

Symptoms of food poisoning usually begin within a day or two after she eats the contaminated food, but can appear hours to weeks later. Microbial infections such as viruses, bacteria and parasites are responsible for most foodborne illnesses. Microorganisms can spread into food at any time during its growing, harvesting, slaughtering, processing, storage, shipping, or preparation. Harmful microorganisms may already be present in food when we purchase it and that may contain microorganisms.

There are over 250 types of food poisoning. Some of the most common types of food poisoning are:

Norovirus is the most common cause of food poisoning. Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that is caused by interactions with other viruses. Norovirus can also be spread by eating contaminated food or water, or by touching a contaminated surface. It is more common where there is a water source. Norovirus symptoms begin within 12 to 48 hours and usually last 1 to 3 days. The most common norovirus symptoms are diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, and abdominal pain.

Rotavirus is a highly contagious virus that causes vomiting, fever, diarrhea, stomach pain, inflammation, and other intestinal symptoms. Rotavirus is most common in infants. Rotavirus symptoms usually begin 2 days after exposure to the virus and last 3 to 8 days. Some medications can relieve symptoms, but antibiotics and antivirals are not effective against rotavirus. Consider getting our child vaccinated against rotavirus to prevent serious illness. Unvaccinated nursery school children are at increased risk of contracting rotavirus.

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