



Food Poisoning (Foodborne infection and intoxication)

What is it?

- Food poisoning is an illness that occurs when food or water contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites, heavy metals, fungi, pathogens, or toxins is consumed.
- There are at least 30 known infections that cause food poisoning. Some of the organisms that cause foodborne illness in Canada include norovirus, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*.

How is it spread?

- By eating or drinking contaminated food or water.
- One in eight Canadians (approximately 4 million people) get sick from foodborne illness each year.

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms depend on what is causing the illness and may include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, feeling unwell, dizziness, and/or headache.

How is it treated?

- Drink plenty of fluids. Oral rehydration fluids are helpful in preventing dehydration and can be purchased at drug stores.
- Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or as required. Treatment will be determined by your healthcare provider.

How is it prevented?

- Wash hands** after using the bathroom, changing diapers, handling pet feces, and before and after handling food.
- Prevent cross-contamination by using separate cutting boards for meat/poultry and other foods.
- Wash hands, cutting boards, and utensils with warm, soapy water after contact with raw items.

- Ensure meat is well cooked; use a cooking thermometer (meat should not be pink and juices should run clear).
- Separate** raw poultry, meat and seafood from fruits, vegetables, and ready-to-eat foods when shopping, storing, preparing, or serving food.
- Store foods either at or below 4°C or at or above 60°C.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Refer to <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/general-food-safety-tips/safe-internal-cooking-temperatures.html> for more information on food safety and safe internal cooking temperatures.
- Wash all fresh fruit and vegetables before eating.
- Drink only water that is treated, regularly tested, or boiled.
- Consume only pasteurized milk and milk products.
- Use foods from inspected/approved sources.

Should I go to childcare, school or work?

- Stay home until you are symptom-free for 24 hours, or 48 hours if anti-diarrheal medication was used.
- Avoid preparing or serving food to others while ill.
- Wash hands thoroughly and often, using soap and warm, running water for 20-30 seconds.

For further information, please contact the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) Program at 705-474-1400 or toll free at 1-800-563-2808, ext. 5229.

References:

Ministry of Health. (2023). Infectious Diseases Protocol, Appendix 1: Food Poisoning, all causes. Retrieved from: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/food_poisoning_chapter.pdf

Heyman (2022). *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual*, 21st edition. American Public Health Association. Washington, DC, pp. 222-232.

Government of Canada. (2015). Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/food-borne-illness-canada.html>.

Fact Sheet for 13-CDC-1 – 2025-07-21