

**Should you require any further advice you should contact your GP, NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or the Environmental Health Division of Cannock Chase Council on 01543 462621**

Useful websites for further information

Food Standards Agency  
[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health  
[www.cieh.org](http://www.cieh.org)

Health Protection Agency  
[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

H.U.S.H (Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome Help)  
[www.ecoli-uk.com](http://www.ecoli-uk.com)



# Food Poisoning Advice leaflet

This publication can be provided in Braille, on audio cassette tape/disk, **large print** and in other languages on request to **Cannock Chase Council on 01543 462621.**

## What is food poisoning?

Food poisoning is an illness caused by consuming food or drink that has been contaminated by:

- bacteria, such as Salmonella and Campylobacter;
- viruses, such as the Norovirus;
- parasites, such as the Giardia parasite (associated with drinking contaminated water during travel abroad);
- toxins and chemicals, such as lead or mercury (very rare in the UK)

## What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of food poisoning are:-

- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhoea

Other symptoms of food poisoning include:

- stomach cramps
- abdominal pains
- loss of appetite
- muscle pain
- chills
- high temperature

## Onset of illness

The time taken for symptoms to develop after consuming contaminated food or drink, can range from 1 hour to 90 days. However, most cases of food poisoning have an incubation period of between 1 and 3 days.



## Top tips for food safety

### 4 Cs

#### Ways to prevent Food Poisoning

##### Cleaning

- Wash your hands before handling food
- Use antibacterial cleaner on chopping boards

##### Cooking

- Follow Cooking instructions
- Check meat juices run clear
- Check food is piping hot or 75°C
- Defrost food before cooking (if in instructions)

##### Chilling

- Use cool bags/freezer bags for your shopping
- Put chilled shopping in the fridge quickly
- Check the use by dates of your food
- Put leftovers in the fridge
- Check the temperature of your fridge is 5°C
- Throw out of date food away

##### Cross Contamination

- Wash your hands after handling raw foods
- Use one chopping board for raw meats only
- Cover food left out to cool or be eaten later
- Wash salad, fruit and veg
- Keep any pets/pests away from food and work tops



## What should I do if I think I have food poisoning?

### Self Care

In most cases of food poisoning you can treat the symptoms at home without needing a doctor. Dehydration is a risk because fluid is lost as a result of vomiting and diarrhoea. Therefore it is important that you keep yourself hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.

### When to seek medical advice

You should contact your GP or telephone [NHS Direct](#) on [0845 46 47](#) if you have any of the following:-

- vomiting lasting for more than 2 days
- unable to keep liquids down for more than a day
- diarrhoea that lasts for more than three days
- blood in your vomit and/or stools
- changes in mental state, such as confusion and/or seizures (fits)
- double vision and/or slurred speech
- signs of dehydration, such as a dry mouth, sunken eyes, and unable to pass urine

## Preventing the Spread of Infection at work and at home

If you work with food, with young children or older people, or in any care setting you:-

- must NOT go to work until you have been completely symptom-free for at least 48 hours.



### At home you:-

- must wash your hands thoroughly after visiting the toilet, before handling food or after changing soiled nappies (if the infected person is a baby). The use of antibacterial soap and your own towel is advised.
- must ensure that all hand-contact surfaces, such as wash hand basin taps and the handle to the toilet cistern are regularly disinfected.

## Most Common Types of Food Poisoning

Name	Found in/caused by
Campylobacter	Bacteria are usually found in raw meat and poultry, unpasteurised milk and untreated water
Salmonella	Bacteria are often found in raw meat and poultry. Also found in eggs and unpasteurised milk
Listeria	Bacteria found in a range of chilled ready-to-eat food including; pre-packed sandwiches, pâté, soft cheeses such as brie and camembert, cooked sliced meats and smoked salmon
Escherichia coli (E coli)	Bacteria found in the digestive system of many animals, including humans. Most strains are harmless, but E coli O157 can cause serious illness. Most cases of E coli food poisoning occur after eating undercooked beef products such as burgers, drinking unpasteurised milk or by inadequate hand washing after handling raw meat or going to the toilet.
Rotavirus Norovirus	Rotavirus is more common in children because most adults have developed immunity. Norovirus can affect people of any age. People infected with either virus can contaminate food if they do not wash their hands properly after going to toilet and then handle food. Outbreaks generally occur in places such as hospitals, residential homes and nurseries.

Bacterial

Viral

## Prevention

### The Four Cs

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) says that a useful way of preventing food poisoning is to remember the four Cs:-

- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Chilling and
- Cross-contamination

### Cleaning

The spread of harmful bacteria and viruses can be avoided by adopting good standards of personal hygiene and by keeping all your work surfaces and utensils clean.

Wash your hands frequently with soap (preferably antibacterial liquid soap) and warm water, particularly:-

- after going to the toilet
- after handling raw food and
- before preparing food

You should avoid:-

- handling food when you are ill with stomach problems, such as diarrhoea or vomiting and
- touching food if you have sores and cuts (unless they are covered with a waterproof dressing)



### Cooking

You should ensure:-

- food is cooked thoroughly - follow any cooking instructions
- food is piping hot throughout - 75°C if you have a thermometer
- meat juices run clear - check by piercing the thickest part with a skewer or knife
- meat eaten rare e.g. steak, lamb is seared on all surfaces
- reheated food is piping hot all the way through
- food is only reheated once and then thrown away
- frozen meat is defrosted before cooking

### Chilling

It is important that high risk ready-to-eat foods, such as cooked meats and dairy products are kept cool to prevent harmful bacteria from multiplying. You should ensure that:-

- such foods are kept in the refrigerator at 5°C if possible
- chilled foods are eaten within their “use-by” date
- you plan to buy chilled foods on your way home, especially in summer months
- you put chilled food deliveries or shopping into your refrigerator at home as soon as possible
- leftovers or cooling food is put into the refrigerator within 1½ hours
- hot food is cooled quickly by dividing into smaller portions

### Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria are transferred from foods (usually raw foods) to other foods. Contamination can be:-

- direct, where one food contaminated with bacteria touches or drips on to another food type, or
- indirect, where bacteria are spread from one food to another by hands, equipment, work surfaces, utensils, pets or pests.

### To prevent cross-contamination:-

- Always wash your hands after handling raw food
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate, for example, by storing raw meat and poultry in a lidded container at the bottom of your refrigerator
- Use a different chopping board for raw food and ready-to-eat food, or wash and disinfect it well in between preparing different foods



- Never wash raw meat or poultry or leave it to defrost in the sink because this could splash harmful bacteria around the kitchen
- Either use disposable cleaning cloths or ensure that cloths are disinfected daily or washed on a “boil wash” cycle in the washing machine.
- Clean knives and other utensils thoroughly after they have been used with raw food. Chopping boards and work surfaces used in the preparation of ready-to-eat foods should be disinfected before use with a food safe disinfectant or antibacterial spray.