Be Food Safe: Protect Yourself from Food Poisoning

Apr 19, 2016 By: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Anybody can get food poisoning, but most people don't think about food safety until they or someone they know gets sick after eating contaminated food.

Foodborne illness, often called food poisoning, is a common, costly—yet preventable—public health problem. Each year, about 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases. Learn more about foodborne illnesses and what you can do to lower your chances of getting sick.

Common Foodborne Illnesses and Symptoms

The most common foodborne illnesses are norovirus, Salmonella, Clostridium perfringens, and Campylobacter. In most affected persons, symptoms of food poisoning include vomiting and diarrhea, but in some cases, such life-threatening complications as organ failure occur.

In severe cases, foodborne illnesses can cause serious acute illness, long-term health problems or death. Young children, pregnant women, adults over 65, and people with weak immune systems are more likely to get food poisoning, and if they do get sick they might have more severe symptoms. See your doctor or healthcare provider if you have:

High fever (temperature over 101.5°F, measured orally)

Blood in the stools

Frequent vomiting that prevents you from keeping liquids down

Signs of dehydration, including a decrease in urination, a dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up

Diarrheal illness that lasts more than 3 days

Be Food Safe: Learn the Risks and Rules

Anyone can get sick from eating contaminated food. To lower your chances of food poisoning, consider how germs found in contaminated food can make you sick. You can take action to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Here are four simple steps to food safety:

CLEAN

Wash your hands and food-preparation surfaces often. Germs can survive in many places around your kitchen, including your hands, utensils, and cutting boards. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running water.

SEPARATE

Don't cross-contaminate. Even after you've cleaned your hands and surfaces thoroughly, raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can still spread germs to ready-to-eat foods—unless you keep them separate.

COOK

Cook to the right temperature. Use a food thermometer to ensure that foods are cooked to a safe internal temperature: 145°F for whole meats (allowing the meat to cool for 3 minutes before carving or consuming), 160°F for ground meats, and 165°F for all poultry.

CHILL

Keep your refrigerator below 40°F and refrigerate foods promptly. Germs can grow in many foods within 2 hours unless you refrigerate them. (During the summer heat, cut that time down to 1 hour.)