

# Foodborne Illness

## FACTS:

- Foodborne disease is caused by consuming contaminated foods or beverages. Many different disease-causing microbes, or pathogens, can contaminate foods, so there are many different foodborne infections. In addition, poisonous chemicals or other harmful substances can cause foodborne diseases if they are present in food.
- Foodborne illness outbreaks involve two or more unrelated cases having similar features or involving the same pathogen; or single incidents of certain rare foodborne pathogens. (Based on definition in Michigan Food Law, P.A. 92 of 2000, Section 3103)
- The most commonly recognized foodborne infections are those caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, and *E. coli* O157:H7, and by a group of viruses called calicivirus, also known as the Norwalk and Norwalk-like viruses.
- Many food-related illnesses go unreported due to the mistaken belief that it is just the "24 hour flu". Common foodborne illness symptoms consist of nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea and on average last 24 to 48 hours.

## Bats, Bugs and Bacteria Month

### RESOURCES:

#### Michigan Department of Community Health - Foodborne Illness

<http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186-32755---,00.html>

#### Michigan Department of Agriculture - Food Safety in the Home

[http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1566\\_2404\\_2427---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1566_2404_2427---,00.html)

#### Michigan Department of Agriculture - Food Recalls

[http://www.michigan.gov/mda/1,1607,7-125-1566\\_2404\\_2437---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mda/1,1607,7-125-1566_2404_2437---,00.html)

#### Center for Disease Control - Food-related diseases

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food/index.htm>

#### Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Foodborne illness fact sheets](#)

#### Food Safety Information Center

[http://foodsafety.nal.usda.gov/nal\\_display/index.php?info\\_center=16&tax\\_level=1](http://foodsafety.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=16&tax_level=1)



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

**Improper handling of food is the most common cause of foodborne illness. The two most common mistakes are:**

1. Food not being maintained or cooked at temperatures that prevent or destroy microbial growth
2. Cross contamination from raw to ready- to-eat foods. The overgrowth of bacteria may cause gastrointestinal discomfort, vomiting, muscle aches and other associated symptoms.

**It only takes a few simple precautions to reduce the risk of foodborne diseases (according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention):**

- **COOK:** meat, poultry and eggs thoroughly. Using a thermometer to measure the internal temperature of meat is a good way to be sure that it is cooked sufficiently to kill bacteria.
- **SEPARATE:** Don't cross-contaminate one food with another. Avoid cross-contaminating foods by washing hands, utensils, and cutting boards after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry and before they touch another food.
- **CHILL:** Refrigerate leftovers promptly. Bacteria can grow quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate leftover foods if they are not going to be eaten within 4 hours.
- **CLEAN:** Wash produce. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables in running tap water to remove visible dirt and grime. Remove and discard the outermost leaves of a head of lettuce or cabbage. Because bacteria can grow well on the cut surface of fruit or vegetable, be careful not to contaminate these foods while slicing them up on the cutting board, and avoid leaving cut produce at room temperature for many hours.

## SERVICES AVAILABLE:

The local public health department is an important part of the food safety system. Often, calls from concerned citizens are how outbreaks are first detected. If a public health official contacts you to find out more about an illness you had, your cooperation is important.

In public health investigations, it can be as important to talk to healthy people as to ill people. Your cooperation may be needed even if you are not ill.

**Contact your local health department to report a suspected foodborne illness.**