



Avoiding Foodborne Illness

During the warmer months it is important to take some steps to protect kids and the rest of the family from contracting food-related diseases. Hot and humid weather can provide the perfect environment for bacteria, viruses and other agents to develop in many foods.

Several food-related illnesses can be severe and may even cause death in children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems. Every year in the United States, more than 76 million people get sick, 300,000 are hospitalized, and 5,000 die as a result of food-related illnesses.

Foodborne illness results from eating food contaminated with bacte-

ria (or their toxins) or other pathogens such as parasites or viruses. Careful preparation and food storage at picnics, barbeques and other outdoor events can help prevent the spread of illness.

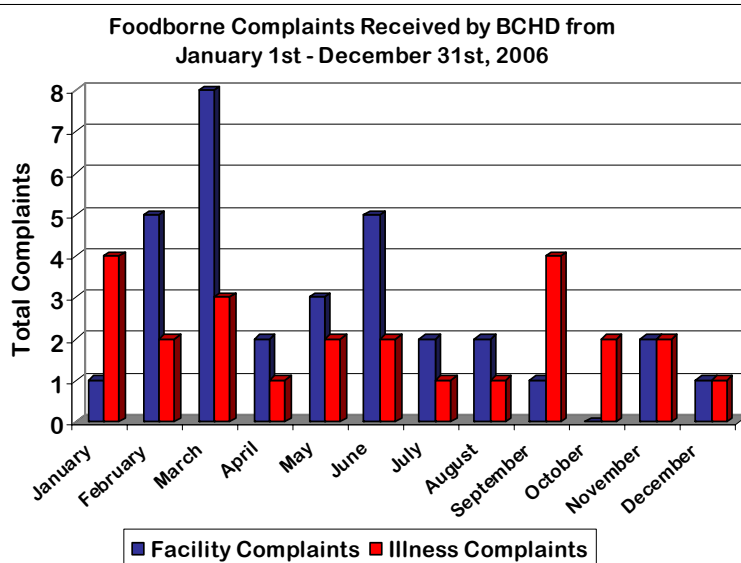
Symptoms of food-related illnesses range from upset stomach to more serious problems, including diarrhea, fever, vomiting, stomach cramps, and dehydration. Illness may last from a few hours to several days.

Some people are at greater risk for bacterial infections because of their age or immune status. Young children, pregnant women and their fetuses, the elderly, and people with lowered immunity are at greatest risk.

Harmful bacteria is the most common cause of foodborne illnesses. Raw meat and poultry may become contaminated during slaughter. Seafood may become contaminated during harvest or through processing. One in 20,000 eggs may be contaminated with Salmonella inside the egg shell. Produce such as lettuce, tomatoes, sprouts, and melons can become contaminated with Salmonella, Shigella, or E. Coli. Contamination can occur during growing, harvesting, processing, storing, shipping, or final preparation. Contamination may also occur during food preparation in the restaurant or in the kitchen.

Prevention

Most cases of food illness can be prevented through proper cooking or processing of food, which kills bacteria. In addition, because bacteria multiply rapidly between 40 degrees Fahrenheit and 140 degrees Fahrenheit, food must be kept out of this danger zone. In addition, always practice proper hand washing and safe food handling.



It only takes a few simple precautions to reduce the risk of foodborne diseases

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 enough 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/poultry and before they touch another food.

Confirmed Cases of Foodborne Illness Reported to MDSS for Berrien County, 2006	# of Cases
Campylobacter	13
Cryptosporidiosis	1
Giardiasis	7
Salmonellosis	4
Shigellosis	7
Total	32

CHILL: Refrigerate leftovers right away. Bacteria can grow quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate leftover foods if they are not going to be eaten within 4 hours.

CLEAN: 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. Avoid leaving cut produce at room temperature for many hours.

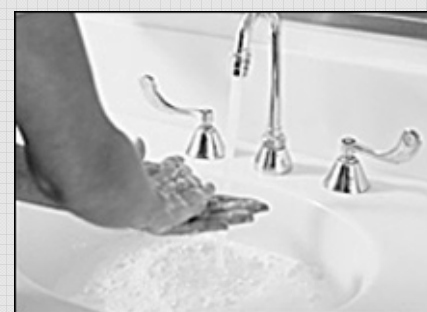
Berrien County Health Department:

Preventing Disease, Prolonging Life and Protecting the Health of the Community.



BATS, BUGS & BACTERIA

The warm humid air of July makes this time of year a high-risk period for bugs and bacteria. The Berrien County Health Department will provide you with information throughout the month on West Nile Virus, foodborne illnesses, rabies, E.Coli and outbreaks. For more information on any of these topics, please call the Berrien County Health Department at 269-926-7121. Happy Summer!



SERVICES AVAILABLE: Berrien County Health Department

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 the health department to report a suspected foodborne illness at 926-7121.



The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor		Niles		Three Oaks	
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm	
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800	756-2008	
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500			

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