

Food Poisoning Bacteria

What is Bacteria?

Bacteria can be found everywhere in the environment. Bacteria can be found on our bodies, in the soil, in water, air and in the food we eat.

Many types of bacteria are good, useful and essential to our health & survival. However, there are certain strains of bacteria - known as *pathogenic bacteria* - that are harmful to humans.

If a person eats food contaminated by pathogenic bacteria, it may lead to extreme illness (possibly even death), acute vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, headaches, body aches, stomach cramps and the like.

Different levels of sickness may be caused by pathogenic bacteria depending upon the following variables:

- i) type of pathogenic bacteria present,
- ii) the number of pathogenic bacteria present, and
- iii) the risk type of person (high risk people include the immuno-deficient, young, old & pregnant mothers)



How can I prevent harmful bacteria contaminating my food?

By following the six easy steps below, we can prevent the likelihood of bacterial contamination occurring.



Most food poisoning cases are a result of mishandled food - keeping food at the wrong temperature, cross contamination, unhygienic practices or incorrect re-heating. The information on the following page will help you understand more about specific food poisoning bacteria and how to prevent it.

Common food poisoning bacteria

Pathogenic Bacteria	Common source of illness	Prevention methods
<i>Yersinia enterocolitica</i> (gastroenteritis)	Generally found in raw vegetables, uncooked meats and contaminated water.	Thorough cooking of foods; sanitising cutting instruments and cutting boards; avoidance of unpasturised milk and unchlorinated water.
<i>Salmonella</i> spp.	Raw meat, poultry, eggs & fish.	Sanitary food handling; thorough cooking; correct temperature control.
<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	Particularly from dirt on food or from food handlers hands who do not wash hands after using the toilet.	Sanitary food handling; thorough cooking; correct temperature control.
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	Found in nasal passages, mouth, boils, pimples & infected skin wounds.	Sanitary food handling procedures; correct temperature control.
<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	Especially cooked rice, potatoes, cereal products, spices & herbs and custard powder.	Correct temperature control.
<i>Clostridium botulinum</i>	Commonly produced from a toxin in low acid, anerobic conditions.	Correct canning methods, avoid damaged cans.
<i>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</i>	From contaminated fish and shellfish.	Sanitary food handling; thorough cooking.
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Soft cheese, uncooked mince, water.	Sanitary food handling; correct temperature control and thorough cooking.
Listeriosis	Wide spread commonly found in soil and sewage. Also found in a variety of foods such as milk, soft cheese, raw vegetables, pate, pre-prepared salads & sushi, smoked seafood, soft serve ice creams....	Avoid eating high risk foods, good food handling including thorough cooking of foods, eat only freshly prepared foods.
<i>Campylobacter</i>	Raw poultry, meat, unpasturised milk.	Thorough cooking of foods, handling food in a sanitary manner, avoiding unpasturised milk.

The costs of food borne illness are significant. Costs may be imposed on the consumer, the government (health care and investigation), the food industry and your food business.

To prevent unnecessary costs and to protect the health of the community – **please handle food with care!**

For further information, please contact Waverley Councils Environmental Health Section on 9369-8000.